

The
Sermon on the Mount
Expounded

By
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Eighth Edition



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PUBLISHERS COMMENTS

This rich and exciting exposition by Robert Govett has been, perhaps, the easiest to obtain in second-hand book stores due to a more recent printing (1934) and seven prior impressions. Still, many of the mature and better Bible students have been unable to enjoy this thorough exposition being unable to obtain it. Now, with great pleasure, this study is presented to you again... the better Bible student . . . for your enjoyment and preparatory readiness to meet our Lord Jesus Christ as a faithful servant.

—SCHOETTLE

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PREFACE.

THE great doctrine contained in these expositions of the Sermon on the Mount is beginning, as was foreseen, to create some stir.

But so unpalatable is its teaching, that strong attempts are making to get rid of it. A word or two then, by way of preface, may be useful.

This is a question between those who hold premillennial views. The doctrine does not affect the truths ordinarily accounted orthodox. Eternal life is held to be the free gift of God to His elect, through the atonement of His Son, by both parties in the debate.

I. Some then attempt to steam past this fortress by asserting, that the change of dispensation introduced by the descent of the Holy Ghost, has made null the Sermon on the Mount to us. 'Its precepts were intended for *Jewish* disciples only.'

It has been put thus :—

'Were these disciples whom Jesus addressed, "the

Church? Did they know anything as yet of Jesus' death and resurrection? Had the Holy Spirit yet descended?'

No: but as soon as the Holy Spirit did descend, *these disciples of the Mount were the first stones of the Church.* They esteemed themselves bound by these words of Jesus, until the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost—did they not? They owned Jesus as their Master till then—did they not? John xiii. 13, 14; xx. 16. Did the Holy Ghost then come to release them from their obedience? or only to 'teach them all things that Jesus had said, and to bring all things to their remembrance?' John xiv. 26.

Is not grace the Church's rule? Is not the Sermon on the Mount the teaching of grace?

Are *we disciples of Jesus?* If He be our Teacher only after He rose from the dead, where is His system to be found? We have scarce a general precept recorded after that date. The great body of His doctrine preceded His resurrection. The Holy Spirit caused that portion of His words to be written for us. Nay, and still further, the Holy Ghost, foreseeing this attempt to throw overboard the Saviour's precepts, has counteracted it by some of the Lord's few words after His rising from the tomb. "All authority is given Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, *disciple* all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, **TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I COMMANDED**

you [Greek]:" Matt. xxviii. 18—20. There is no escape then in this direction. The risen Jesus bids disciples obey His *words uttered previous to His resurrection.*

And the Acts of the Apostles, the inspired record of the Church's development, uses the word "disciple" as equivalent to believer. "A great number [at Antioch] *believed*, and turned to the Lord." "And the *disciples* were divinely called [Greek] *Christians* first in Antioch:" Acts xi. 21, 26. Also Acts xiii. 48, 52; xiv. 20, 22, 23.

Few then will be prepared to follow out dispensational discrimination so far, as to deny themselves to be 'disciples of Christ.'

II. Again, if these precepts of the Sermon on the Mount do not bind us, it must be, *because we are not to enter the kingdom of which it treats.* For these are the Master's regulations for those who are *seeking* the Kingdom of God: Matt. vi. 33. Jesus assures us, too, that He is fully purposed to *exclude all those, who indeed admire Him as a teacher, but refuse to obey His sayings:* Matt. vii. 21—27; v. 20.

The precepts, with their rewards and penalties, are knit together. Vainly would mortal hand seek to rend them asunder. The great reward is the kingdom: Matt. v. 3—10; vi. 33. If now the *precepts* and the *penalties* do not apply to us, so neither does the *reward.* If ours be the future *kingdom*, ours too is the *rule* given to those who desire to enter it.

III. Again, even if any could rase this fort, another faces them. 'The Sermon on the Mount is not for Christians.' But what say you to like passages in the Epistles to the Churches?

What think you of the threats to erroneous teachers, and disturbers of Churches? 1 Cor. iii. 8—17. To believers guilty of acts of injustice and other crying sins? 1 Cor. vi. 1—11, and so on. Even the Epistle to Ephesus, the citadel to which the beaten artillerymen of the dispensations retreat, bears its consenting testimony: Eph. v. 3—7; vi. 5—9. Compare Col. iii. 22—25.

IV. Lastly, the extreme severity of discipline maintained by many of the opponents of this truth bears silent testimony against them.

The Church is the nursery for the kingdom. The disciples' exclusion of an offending brother from communion with the Church, and putting him into the world again, is a silent witness of the Lord's future exclusion from the kingdom. The sins which ought to exclude from the *Church* will exclude, as the Apostle tells us, from the *kingdom*: 1 Cor. v., vi. The two chapters touch each other; so close also is their real connexion.

Does the disciple then, for even a mistaken opinion, thrust out his fellow believer from the Church into the world? Oh then, much more shall the Lord exclude from the kingdom for open and flagrant sin, against which even natural conscience bears testimony!

All the results of this great doctrine it is impossible to foresee. But some important ones may be traced.

If its opponents maintain their hold on the doctrine of the millennium, it will drive them to strange extremities.

The present attitude of most assailants is this:—

1. 'We admit, that there will be rewards.'

2. 'We confess, that the believer sins, and as a consequence receives chastisement. But it is only in this life!'

3. Some go further, and allow that offending believers will suffer loss at Christ's coming. But it will not amount to exclusion from the kingdom.

But the outcry against the doctrine is so sharp, that those who admit so much will find themselves in a very awkward position.

Impartial Christians aroused at the stir, and learning the state of the case, will say to such: 'What! are you crying out that this man is subverting the truth, and unfit for communion, while you are holding the very principle he affirms, and differ only in the extent to which it shall be pushed? Christ, you admit, will call believers before His judgment-seat. You think that negation of reward alone will ensue. *He*, that in extreme cases, positive punishment will be awarded. Is *that* all the difference about which this loud hue and cry is raised? You agree in the principle, you differ about its extent. If he, then, be a burglar, you are guilty of petty larceny.'

Such assailants, too, will be looked on with suspicion by the stouter-hearted opponents of the doctrine, as almost traitors to the truth.

Most then will take up the ground—'Chastisement, but only in this life.'

Your proofs, friend?

'“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth us from all sin* :” 1 John i. 7. Ours is no half-Saviour.'

But you admit, that, in spite of Jesus' atonement, the chastisements of God descend on the offending believer in this life. It is no bar then to their falling on him in the next age. What Scriptures are there which assert, that chastisements shall not befall an offending disciple when our Lord appears?

No such passages are forthcoming.

Proofs to the contrary are many and plain. Take those from a single Gospel: Matt. v. 22—30; vii. 21—27; x. 32, 33, 39; xvi. 25; xviii. 7—9, 21—35; xxiv. 45—51; xxv. 1—30.

This will be felt then to be not very tenable ground. The reasons *why* chastisement *must* end with this life, will be very hard to find, very hard to establish. Many believers have died out of the communion of Churches from which they have been justly excluded for sin. Will *they* be accounted worthy of a place in the *kingdom*, who were put out as unworthy of a place in the *Church*?

Lastly, you admit, friend, that there will be rewards

for the saints' good deeds, at Jesus' appearing. There must then be punishment for their evil deeds, if the coming day be “the day of *justice*” (“judgment”). Shall we give account only of our right expenditure as stewards? or of thriftless and extravagant expenditure also? We may wish it otherwise: but is it not written—that each will “receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be GOOD OR BAD :” 2 Cor. v. 10. “He that doeth WRONG shall RECEIVE FOR THE WRONG WHICH HE HATH DONE, AND THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS :” Col. iii. 25.

Those then who will be quit of this doctrine at all hazards will scarcely feel any position a safe one, but that which asserts: (1) That there is no precept given to the elect of God; (2) And, by consequence, that they never sin, nor ever receive chastisement.

This awful position of unbelief I shall not here assail. My only object is to show the main bearings of the controversy, and to urge believers to look into the matter prayerfully, submitting themselves to the Word of God. To Father, Son, and Spirit, be all glory! Amen.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was the prophet like Moses. There are parallels, designed of God, which run through the characters and histories of the two.

Jesus was born in the crisis of God's mercy to Israel ; so was Moses. He was in danger from the ruler of the land, as was the Hebrew lawgiver ; and both were delivered by the same Almighty hand, in infancy.

John Baptist, also, in some degree, answers to Moses. Judea resembles Egypt under treacherous and oppressing Pharaoh. God calls His people out into "the wilderness" again. He calls them thither in mercy. "The kingdom," foretold by Daniel as given to the Son of man, is at hand. But Israel cannot receive it as the reward of a spotless obedience to law. The conditions of the blessing offered on Sinai (Ex. xix. 5, 6) have not been fulfilled. The whole nation has earned the curse. Yet still the blessing can flow to them through grace. The call by John, therefore, is "Repent !" 'Not

one is righteous. All are evil. Turn from your wicked ways! But beyond law and justice, God has found a way to bless. The long expected kingdom of Messiah is nigh! Only the penitent shall enter it.' But John further teaches baptism. He is the foretold voice in the desert, preparing the way of the Lord. And as Moses gave notice of Jehovah's descent on Sinai, and bids the people, therefore, sanctify themselves and wash their clothes, so John calls on his hearers to be immersed. A greater than himself was at hand.

Multitudes respond to the call; but not the nation as a whole. At length Jesus and John met in the desert, as did Moses and Aaron: Ex. iv. 27, 28. They gave a joint testimony to Israel, as did Jesus and John.

Jesus is baptized. Herein His superiority to Moses is seen. Moses is nearly cut off at the outset of his mission, by God Himself, because his child is uncircumcised: Ex. iv. 14. Jesus with a valid plea of exemption, yet fulfils all righteousness in being immersed in the Jordan. This is the occasion of His inauguration, as prophet, priest, and king. But especially is there a designed comparison with the commission given to Moses: Ex. iii. God speaks to Moses out of the bush, and bids him put off his shoes, because the place was holy. A like feeling possesses John Baptist, when he tells his hearers that he was unworthy to bear the shoes of Jesus; and when he confesses to our Lord's face his need of the better baptism which Jesus alone could bestow.* But to Jesus the Holy Spirit of God draws nigh, and rests on Him as "the Most Holy." To Moses said God, "Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud, that

* Here is a proof that the baptism of the Spirit does not mean regeneration or conversion. Was not John the Baptist converted already? Luke i. 51.

the people *may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.*" Ex. xix. 9. To Jesus God speaks and gives the fullest testimony, as to His beloved Son. With Moses God was angry, even while giving him his commission; so slow of heart was he: Ex. iv. 14. But of the Son it is said, "In whom *I am well pleased.*"

Moses is sent to meet Pharaoh; Jesus to meet the Prince of this world. Satan (like Pharaoh) asks for signs; but is overcome. The condition of the world spiritually is like that of Egypt in Moses' day. "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:" Matt. iv. 16.

To Moses were given signs, as witnesses to Israel of his commission by God. To Jesus are granted miracles of mercy, exhibited before the people. In Moses' day the people *believed* and worshipped: Ex. iv. 31. Deliverance, visible and wrought by power, came speedily. But, in Jesus' day, Israel, though much roused and wrought on at first, believed not. Their deliverance, therefore, is tarrying. But the tidings of the coming kingdom of glory, and these miracles of healing, the first tokens of it, created a great stir in all the Holy Land. Thousands attended to hear the prophet that had arisen.

1. "Now seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He had seated Himself, His disciples came unto Him."

The time was come for the new lawgiver to take His place on the new mount; a mountain, not in the wilderness, but in the land. A definite mountain is supposed by the presence of the article. What mount it was, is doubtful. It is most probable, that it is the solitary hill of Galilee, called "*the Horns of Hatteen.*"

Moses "*went up*" into Mount Sinai. Jéhovah "*came down*" upon it. Jesus, like Moses, "*goes up*" into the mount. But He needs not, like Moses, to be taught of God what He should say. He speaks as Immanuel, "God with us." He "*sits*" as the teacher. His audience is two-fold; the "*multitudes*" composing the outer circle of hearers; the "*disciples*" the inner one. Not all were children of Abraham; not all sons of God. Herein lies a great distinction between the old dispensation and the new. Then *all Israel* entered into covenant with God. Now, the fleshly sons of Abraham stand separated from his spiritual children. Again, the law bade the whole people of God stand aloof from the mount. They might not gaze, lest they should die. Even the priests who drew near were to sanctify themselves, lest the Lord should break forth on them. Here the disciples answer to the priests; they draw near to God manifest in the flesh, and are not checked.

3. "And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying—"

Whom did Jesus teach? *The disciples*, as the words show. It is true that the unbelieving multitudes were present and listened; and commented, at the close of the sermon, on the wonderful words they had heard. But disciples only were the parties directly addressed. This will appear clearly proved to any one who will go carefully through the sermon. He will find that the persons addressed are the world's salt and light; that God is their Father; that His pearls are theirs; His holy things theirs; and they are children of *faith*, though it be but "little faith." The same conclusion may greatly be strengthened, if need be, by comparing with this the similar sermon in Luke vi. "The whole *multitude* sought

to touch Him. . . . And He lifted up His eyes on *his disciples*, and said, Blessed be *ye poor*; for yours is the kingdom of heaven."*

He "opened His mouth;" for mighty was the assembly, and loud the voice needed.

3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is blessing conditionally offered, in the law. But twelve curses precede it: Deut. xxvii. The curse upon a *single transgression* goes before the blessing of Moses and nullifies it. Moses' blessing encircled *the tribes of Israel*; this encompasses *disciples of every nation*.

The style of blessing is also very different, even to contrast. 'Blessed,' said Moses in effect, 'are the *rich in the flesh*:' Deut. xxviii. 3—6. But Jesus pronounces blessed, "the *poor in spirit*." What now is meant by poverty of spirit? The first blessing in Luke vi. is devoted to the disciples who are *physically poor*. But this is poverty, not of *nature*, or of the *flesh*, but of the *spirit*.

It is the studied contrast to the spirit of Israel at Mount Sinai, which was confidence in the flesh. God promises blessing, on condition of their keeping His covenant. "And *all the people answered together, and said*, ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN, WE WILL DO:" Ex. xix. 8. When the commands of the Lord are again definitely given and spoken by Moses, they repeat their promise; and a third time, when read before the

* The sermon in Luke vi., greatly as it resembles the one in Matthew, is not the same. Greswell has well pointed out the differences. In Luke there is no reference to the law's commands, which is so prominent a feature in Matthew.

multitude assembled to enter into covenant, the cry still is, "ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SAID WE WILL DO, AND BE OBEDIENT:" Ex. xxiv. 3, 7. At once the covenant was based on this ground, and the blood sprinkled. But how did that confidence end? In an open national breach of its chief command, before the very face of the mount! Confidence in the flesh, then, is no standing-ground for a disciple: Phil. iii. 3.

Poverty of spirit is the temper of the Psalmist, sensible of transgression, of its deep roots in the soul, and of its just desert, yet confident of God's grace and His provided righteousness, as we see in Psa. li. 5, 6, 10, 16, 17. It is the temper described by the Prophet, after pouring contempt upon the law's material residence provided by God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is *poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*:" Isa. lxvi. 2.

It is the proper answer to God's call, just raised by the Baptist—"Repent!" Yes! the soul is by it made sensible of no deserts from justice, but eternal death. It confesses that there is no strength in the flesh to obey and win itself eternal life by obedience. It would not put itself under law, but under grace. It is the perfect contrast to the spirit of the Pharisee, strong in assurance of its own powers and righteousness; 'tis the spirit of the publican: Luke xviii. 9. To this temper the law was designed to lead. It was given on purpose to bring down man's false notions of his strength.

It is the contrast to the spirit of the *world*, and of the *flesh* still. That is still boasting of "progress." Still prophesying the 'world's regeneration,' and the 'good time coming,' through man's strength and goodness. 'Poverty in *self*, riches in *Christ*,' is the true

sentiment of a son of the kingdom: Rom. vii. 18; iv. 13; 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

But why are they blessed?

Because "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

What is meant by this kingdom?

1. 'Tis commonly understood to signify—*The Gospel Dispensation*. But this idea has poured darkness over many passages, which else had shone with surpassing lustre.

2. It really means, in every case—*THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF MESSIAH*. 'Tis that kingdom which Daniel promised (Dan. vii. 13) to Christ and to the saints: ver. 18, 22, 27. It is the kingdom which Israel was then expecting; a kingdom in which the patriarchs and prophets are to have part by rising from the dead: Matt. viii. 11. 'Tis the kingdom for which angels are to make way, by execution of judgment on the living sons of iniquity, and in which the righteous have a portion, when their bodies shine as the sun: Matt. xiii. 41, 43. 'Tis the kingdom for which we are instructed in this very sermon to pray, that it may come and effect a revolution "on earth." 'Tis the kingdom which is the complement of the Law and the Prophets, and of the promises to Abraham and his seed. 'Tis the true Sabbath figured by the law, in its seventh day, seventh month, seventh year, and seven times seventh year of jubilee. It is the "*rest* which remaineth for the people of God:" Heb. iv. 2. Under the old dispensation God *commanded* rest: under the new He is to *give* it. 'Tis the kingdom of the Christ foretold in the Apocalypse. Jesus pronounces those "BLESSED," who enter it. So does the beloved Apostle. "BLESSED and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God

and of the Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years :” Rev. xx. 4.

The Pharisee then, or the self-justifier, cannot enter this glory. We are not even at the starting-point of the race, till we renounce our own righteousness, and welcome Messiah’s : Phil. iii. ; Rom. iv. 12, 15.

4. “Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.”

What can call forth the mourning of disciples ?

1. Their own *sins* : Isa. lix. 11 ; 2 Cor. ii. 7.

2. *The trials and sorrows of time*, felt either directly, or by sympathy : Rom. xii. 15. Thus, Jesus wept with the sisters of Bethany : John xi. 33, 35. Especially those peculiar sorrows which arise out of faith. Thus, Paul speaks of his many tears arising from the persecution of the Jews (Acts xx. 19, 31), and from his service among believers. The bridegroom is away : the children of the bride-chamber rightly mourn : Matt. ix. 15.

3. The sins of the *world* and of the Church may also lawfully and fitly call forth tears : 1 Cor. v. 2 ; 2 Cor. ii. 4 ; Ezek. ix. 4.

Jesus pronounces mourning disciples “blessed,” of whatever nation they may be. Isaiah, as the prophet of Israel, has a word of blessing for “mourners in Zion,” as well “as for *all* that mourn :” Isa. xi. 2, 3.

(1) This spirit is the contrast to the *law*. That bade its subjects to rejoice. If obedient, they should be happy. It had festival-seasons in which they were to display joy : Lev. xxiii. 40 ; Deut. xii. 6, 7 ; xvi. 14, 15 ; xxvi. 11. None such are commanded under the gospel. The old skin is unsuited to the new wine.

(2) ’Tis the contrast also to the ideas of *nature*.

“Happy are the merry,” is the notion of mankind. But, as ‘the sorrow of the world works death’ (2 Cor. vii. 10), so the Saviour utters a woe against the mirthful disciple : Luke vi. 25. The world’s time of laughter is now in the saint’s time of sorrow : but the day of reversal is coming : John xvi. 1, 20, 22.

Why are they blessed ?

Because they should be “comforted.” When ? In the millennial kingdom. That is the season of rest and of comfort for God’s sorrowing and suffering ones. There is a woe on the rich disciple, who obtains his consolation here and now : Luke vi. 24. The comfort is to come (as Isaiah intimates) after the ‘acceptable year’ is finished, and after the ‘day of vengeance :’ Isa. lxi. The sufferers for Christ’s sake appear prominently in the sketch of the millennial kingdom : Rev. xx. 4. Christ shall comfort then ! For a thousand years shall joy swallow up the bitter remembrances of the past. Look onward, mourner for Christ, the bright morning is near !

5. “Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.”

Meekness is the patience of one suffering unjustly. It is seen in its fulness, where there is power to avenge one’s self, yet not even a word of impatience or of threat is uttered. This is to be the temper of the disciples of Jesus. As forgiven in grace by God, it is becoming in them to be meek before men. The note thus struck was one for which Israel was quite unprepared. They expected in Jesus a Joshua who would at once put down evil with power. The law supposed *might* to be on the side of *righteousness*. ‘Eye for eye,’ was its principle. ‘Let the evil-doer suffer ! Let justice triumph !’ The manslayer was to be slain : the thief punished. The gospel supposes *power* to be on the side of *evil* : and the

disciples of Jesus consequently to be called to suffer : 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21. This word of Jesus teaches the spirit in which that suffering is to be borne.

But, perhaps, it may be said,—‘These words are a quotation from the Psalms : your contrast cannot be maintained.’ ’Tis true, that the promise here given was previously made in Psalm xxxvii. But it is to be observed, that the Psalms and Prophets occupy a position a long way ahead of the law : and that, in most cases, they utter sentiments approaching to those of the gospel. David, the writer of the Psalms, was God’s anointed, but long was he kept out of the kingdom, and power was arrayed against him. He was content to wait God’s time for his entrance into the kingdom.

But why are the meek blessed ?

Because, they “shall inherit the earth.”

I remember reading an anecdote of a lady, who was standing near the cottage of a poor widow about the time of her dinner, and overheard her, as she gave thanks over her poor fare, to say with holy joy—‘What ! all this ! and Christ besides !’

Whereupon, the writer says, ‘Thus do the meek inherit the earth !’

But, that is wholly to pervert the sentiment of the text. It is not that the meek *do* at present enjoy the power, and riches, and happiness of the earth. Meekness is the way to *lose* the things of the world. ’Tis ‘the man of spirit who stands up for his rights,’ who generally keeps his property secure. The meek are often robbed, scorned, trodden down. The promise is, that they *shall* inherit the earth.

When ? When the kingdom of heaven is come. When the saints of the heavenlies take the kingdom under the whole heaven : Dan. vii. To this the xxxvii.

Psalm looks forward, as the time of consolation for the meek. God’s hand, as the great Avenger, shall cut off the wicked and violent from the earth. His enemies shall be destroyed : Psa. xxxvii. 10, 17, 28, 34, 38. *Then* the righteous shall enjoy the earth : 29, 39, 40.

But, is the earth to be the portion of a disciple of Jesus ? Yes, in part. Jesus speaks of the sons of the resurrection : and they, while possessing the heavenly Jerusalem as their great and natural centre, are yet to reign over the earth : and to be upon it, in conjunction with our Lord.

This then conveys to the believer in Jesus, the lesson that he is not to avenge himself : not to stand up for his rights, whether by the sword, or by law.

But how then will those meet the Saviour, who have transgressed in this respect ? Cromwell seems to have been a truly converted person : but his spirit was that of the law. To redress grievances, he took the sword. By the sword, he sought to maintain righteousness and avenge evil. What bitterness that career brought with it, even in this world ! And can those who refuse meekness as their principle, look for the portion of the meek in the millennial kingdom ?

6. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.”

The temper spoken of in this verse is strongly allied to poverty of spirit. The renewed soul that is sensible of sin, is likely to feel a desire for holiness. The sense of spiritual want craves, like a natural appetite, its fill. The world is felt to be a place of wickedness. Even within the renewed, sin lodges, though hated. The regenerate desires the victory of holiness, in himself

and others. This is a blessed feeling : wrought by the Spirit of God.

Here is a standing very different from that of the law. Law assumed that its subjects were already *full* of righteousness ; and that they would cause its streams to flow forth from themselves throughout their life. Here we have a sense of deficient holiness, together with the desire for it, strong as hunger, abiding as thirst.

Israel was hungry and thirsty in the wilderness. But it was natural, not spiritual hunger. They were not blessed, but cut off in their unholiness : 1 Cor. x.

Why are *these* hungerers blessed ?

Because "they shall be filled."

There was a partial fulfilment of this, when the completed righteousness of Christ was set before the disciples of Jesus, and received by them. Law was but the conviction of sin and the introduction of its power, together with the terrors of the penalty. But now, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace :"* Rom. vi. 14. The imputation of the perfect righteousness of Jesus is the pledge of the complete internal sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

But the promise awaits its fulfilment in the future : "They *shall* be filled."

1. The first and nearest fulfilment will be in the *millennial kingdom*. In that day of the resurrection of the just, this body of sin will be put off for ever. There will be no more a traitor within : no more will Satan tempt.

* See Greek. Some say, that there is no such expression as 'the righteousness of Christ.' They are mistaken "To them that obtained like precious faith with us *in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ* : " 2 Pet. i. 1. (See Greek.)

There will be the reign of righteousness also, in some good degree, around. The earth will be ruled over by the saints : righteous vengeance will put down the rising of evil ; the wicked will be cut off, so that the dwellers in the flesh may be holy. Of Israel it is said, "Thy people also shall be *all righteous*."

The risen saints will possess, in the New Jerusalem, a city of righteousness perfect and entire. Into it, even in millennial days, nothing of evil shall enter.

2. But in the *new heavens and earth*, upon which the city of God shall descend, righteousness shall perfectly and finally dwell : 2 Pet. iii. 13. Thirst not then for gold, Christian ! The covetous is an idolater. The covetous shall not inherit the kingdom, as he ought not, even now, to abide in the Church : 1 Cor. v. 11 ; vi. 10.

7. "Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy."

Mercy is the spirit which is displayed when *offenders are in our power* : when we might exact our dues, and inflict woe upon our enemies. It appears also to include kindness to those in distress.

The law set up justice as its standard. "*Justice, justice* (marg.) shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee : " Deut. xvi. 20. It bade the Jew use this principle in his dealings with his fellows, because that was the principle of God's dealings with himself. It supposed that he rendered to the law all its dues, and it therefore permitted him to exact the same of others.

But the gospel has come in with its cry of 'Repentance !' It asserts the sinfulness of all. It teaches, that only in God's grace is there any hope for transgressors. It bids us, therefore, to use in our dealings, both with the Church and with the world, the

principle on which we take our stand before God. The parable of the unmerciful servant is designed to show us the unseemliness of the contrary conduct, and its terrible results, when God shall judge: Matt. xviii. 21. And James states the same principle in plain words. "So speak ye and so do, *as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy: mercy rejoiceth against judgment:*" * James ii. 12, 13.

The reason of the blessedness of the merciful is then assigned. "They shall obtain mercy." Of this Psalm xviii. 25 is an ancient witness. "With the merciful thou wilt show Thyself merciful." David found it so. He often spared Saul; he would not put Shimei to death. When he himself is found an offender, he is forgiven. "The Lord also hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die."

Thus, God is pleased to show mercy to the merciful, even here.

But the time for its full display is future. It takes place at the judgment to which Christ will call all His people, a judgment preceding the kingdom. Of this, Paul gives a very clear testimony. "The Lord give mercy to the house of ONESIPHORUS, for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day!" 2 Tim. i. 16—18.

"At that day!" Yes! mercy will be needed by the saint then, when every deed of his, "whether good or evil," comes before Christ: 2 Cor. v. 10.

Then, Christian, take mercy as your rule. Exact not your debts. "With the same measure that ye measure withal, it shall be measured to you again."

* The *Kai* omitted by critical editions.

Forgive those that offend against you! Show kindness to the feeble, the sick, the aged. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

As a consequence of this, it seems clear, that no Christian ought to be a lawyer, or a magistrate, a member of the army, or of the navy. For all these are different forms of the carrying out of the principle of justice, and not of mercy.

v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The law demanded *cleanness of the flesh*. No polluted food might enter an Israelite's lips. He must be cleansed from the touch of the dead. He was to bathe, after contact with uncleanness.

But here is a far higher standard. Israel might be clean of *flesh*; pure of heart they were not. But the Psalmist, inspired of God, gave intimations of this loftier height. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" "He that hath *clean hands and a pure heart.*" But how shall the evil heart be kept under, and overcome? How the unclean thoughts be purified? The Saviour came to tell, yea, to send the Spirit of holiness.

Why are the pure of heart blessed?

Because "they shall see God."

The reference is, manifestly, to Israel at Sinai. Moses was commissioned to tell them,—'Your God is coming down to show Himself to you. He is a God that loves purity; cleanse yourselves and your dress!' Ex. xix. 9—11. Israel did so, and obtained a distant, awful view of God in the fiery, cloudy mount. The Lord came "down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

But a still more gracious vision of Jehovah was

granted to the favoured seventy, after Israel had been cleansed by the sacrifices, and the sprinkled blood of the covenant. "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. AND THEY SAW THE GOD OF ISRAEL; and there was under His feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand; also THEY SAW GOD, and did eat and drink:" Ex. xxiv. 9—11.

Israel's cleansing of *body* admitted to a brief and unsatisfactory *vision of God*. But the *higher purity* shall admit to a more blessed and *abiding sight of God*, both of the Father and of the Son, in the kingdom.

The unclean body of the flesh shall be put off in resurrection; and with it Isaiah's feeling of despair at beholding the purity of God: Isa. vi.

To this internal cleanness Paul exhorts us. "Follow peace with all, and *the holiness, without which none shall see the Lord*:" Heb. xii. 14. (See Greek.)

This sight of God, then, is a vision of reward, and it implies the time of the millennial kingdom. All shall see the Judge at last, and their sentence shall be passed by Him. But this is a vision of joy, attendant on a likeness to the Most High.

Is it not also clear, that believers offending against this will not have part in this vision of reward? Does not the positive carry with it the negative, throughout the series of the beatitudes? Is it not expressly said so, in regard to believers offending in this particular? 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Eph. v. 5, 6; 1 Thess. iv. 3—8. Do not the Saviour's words which soon after follow,

in the body of the sermon, assert the same thing? ver. 27—32.

9. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God."

What is intended by 'the peacemaker' needs no explanation. To bring parties offended and at strife to be at one again, is his privilege. He may thus be employed, either in the Church or in the world. In a fallen world, contentions, feuds, hatred abound. And alas! even in the Church of Christ there are but too many brethren who have fallen out by the way. But this temper is peculiar to the gospel. The people of the first covenant were *men of war*, sent forth to *destroy; forbidden to make any truce or peace with the nations in the land*: Ex. xxiii. 32; xxxiv. 12; Dent. vii. 1—3; xx. They were marching against God's enemies; and God appointed His trumpets and His priests to encourage them.

And how startling the contrast to the sentiment furnished by Psalm cxxxvii. 8, 9. "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy ['Blessed,' Prayer-book version] shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. *Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones!*" How can such a passage be accounted for? Only on the supposition that the principle of the Law is *justice*; that of the Gospel, *mercy*. While, then, war was lawful under the Old Testament, it is not under the New. Can a believer who continues a military man, hope for millennial reward? I think not.

How remarkable, *that on the very mount on which it is believed that the Saviour spoke this word, a multitude calling themselves Christians, and wearing the cross*

upon their armour, fought professedly in the Saviour's cause, against the Saracens! The BATTLE ON THE MOUNT is a startling comment upon the SERMON ON THE MOUNT! How had the tiny mustard seed become a tree of worldly greatness, filled with evil birds!

But why are the peacemakers blessed?

Because "they shall be called sons of God."

By whom shall they be called so? 'Tis a maxim of constitutional law, that the monarch is the fountain of honour. This honorary title, then, shall be bestowed by the Lord Himself. And the time of its bestowal will be, in the kingdom of the thousand years.

At present men love the titles, and garb, and pomp of war. To be a peacemaker now involves trouble and reproach. But that shall be the kingdom of the "Prince of Peace." 'Tis not promised, that they shall produce peace now. But, as during the evil age they showed themselves to be like God their Father, making peace where they could, in a world of contention; so, when God shall give peace on earth, shall they receive at His hand the title of 'Sons of God!' And earth will own this new patent of nobility, in that day, when on those who are "contentious" there will be "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish:" Rom. ii. 8.

In this excellent employment, then, of peace-making, engage yourself, Christian! It may cause you to be accounted an impertinent, meddlesome person now; but it will receive its reward hereafter.

10. "Blessed are they who have been persecuted* for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This beatitude was of the deepest moment in some great questions of yore: which will soon be revived—

* See Greek.

'Was Jesus at variance with Moses? Was "the Father" who was proclaimed by Jesus the "Jehovah" of the Old Testament?'

In this verse and the next we find, united in the glory of the millennial kingdom, God's worthies of the Old Testament, and those of the New. Then the Gnostic idea—'that Jesus was hostile to the Creator, the God of the Jews,'—is false. Here our Lord recognizes God's servants of the Old Testament, as having been "persecuted." That was not the original standing given by the law to its observers. Moses promised to the obedient the favorable regards of the world. "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people:" Deut. iv. 6. "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways." "And the Lord shall make thee *the head and not the tail*; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath, if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God:" Deut. xxviii. 7, 13.

But after the nation became visibly idolatrous, this footing was no longer maintained. God's people in Israel suffered from their own nation. David was hunted on the mountains. Naboth, for refusing to sell his vineyard, was slain. And after the captivity, the holy of Israel suffered much at the hands of the Gentiles, as we see by the histories of Daniel and his companions. They were sufferers "for righteousness' sake." Righteousness is the principle of the law. They endured affliction for obeying God's commands,

as, for instance, circumcision. The Christian, if he suffers according to his calling, suffers for *mercy's sake*.*

Why are they blessed?

Because the kingdom of millennial glory is prepared for them.

This sentiment is more than once expressed by our Lord. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see *Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God*, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from east and west, and from north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God:" Luke xiii. 28, 29. It is confirmed by the Epistle to the Hebrews. After presenting us with a long list of the men of faith, under the Old Testament, the Apostle adds, that both they and we are to be united in one season of consolation: Heb. xi. Thus "the kingdom of heaven," which is really the basis of all the beatitudes, appears expressly in the first and last.

11. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you [falsely] for My sake."

Jesus now assures the disciples, that the same lot which the Old Testament worthies had experienced, was in store for them. 'To do *well* and *suffer*,' is the Christian's strange portion: 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "All that wish to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:" 2 Tim. iii. 12. (See Greek.)

Jesus prepares the disciple for persecution by men's

* The fulness of a passage of Luke has been hidden by a mis-translation. Verses 32 to 34 of Luke vi. we should read as follows—"And if ye love them which love you, *what grace have ye?*" &c. Our present translation sprang, no doubt, from supposing that our Lord must mean the same as in Matt. v. 46.

tongues and by their hands. Christian, you must give up your reputation, if you would be a true disciple! Every false report is to be expected.

But fear not! Reproach, reviling, bitter word, and spiteful conduct, are all for *Christ's sake*! Though you were possessed of all those blessednesses of temper enumerated by the Saviour, you would not escape persecution. Be patient for His sake Who gave up all for us! Our Father is enduring the evil of sinners; so must we. What is faith's attitude under this state of things?

12. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The natural tendency of undeserved ill-treatment is to depress, to drive to tears and to despair. But faith is to lift us above this depression of nature. Faith looks at the *source* of the trial. 'Tis for Christ's sake. The world hates the members of Christ, because it hated the Head. Faith sees also the *issue* of the trouble. It will be swallowed up in glory and the kingdom. These are the grounds of the joy taught us.

Rejoice! For great is your reward in heaven. There is trouble on earth, there is reward on high. If I rightly understand it, the reward is spoken of as *treasured* in heaven; to be brought out thence at the great day. The Saviour does not, I apprehend, by any such expression exclude the suffering saints of the dispensation from reigning on earth.

This, then, is one point of contrast between the Mosaic dispensation and ours. *That* held forth *reward on earth*; *ours*, reward of a *heavenly character, and in heaven*. The more trial now for Christ, the more glory by and by.

How strong the contrast between representatives of the Old Testament, and of the New! Look at SOLOMON, made wise by God, set on the throne, encircled with all that the world could offer; his table and equipage splendid beyond all previous example, object of envy to all, sought out by all the kings of the nations round, that they might hear his wisdom, while they bore in their hands royal presents. Behold PAUL, inspired with a knowledge of far greater secrets of God, but rejected, despised, persecuted, working for his living, without a home, in daily peril of life, acquainted with stripes, prisons, shipwreck! His wisdom is accounted folly; he is "made as the filth of the earth, and the off scouring of all things." But Paul looked for rest "when the Lord Jesus should be revealed from heaven:" 2 Thess. i.

"For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

This is a second and confirmatory reason for the joy taught. Among the servants of God who were persecuted for righteousness' sake, the prophets stand pre-eminent. They were especial witnesses for Jehovah; and as such they had to endure in an especial manner the enmity of the world. 'Theirs is the kingdom,' therefore, of millennial joy. Jesus speaks of them "all" as sitting down in the kingdom: Luke xiii. 28. As, then, you are like sufferers with them, with them shall you rejoice. Here Jesus recognises one especial class of the worthies of the Old Testament. There would be prophets of the New Testament, as well as the prophets of the Old; but the same Holy Spirit would inspire both.

In this view lies the true answer to MR. BINNEY'S question:—'Is it possible to make the best of both

worlds?' We should reply,—'No!' The doctrine that reward in the millennium is in proportion to *action* and *suffering* for our Lord, at once decides it.

MR. BINNEY'S disciple of Jesus would be one who earned wealth and its enjoyments here, and who was in good repute with the world. But the Saviour points four "*woes*" against such a believer? He pronounces "blessed" the loser for His sake. "And He lifted up His eyes on His *disciples* and said, 'Blessed be ye *poor*: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that *hunger* now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that *weep* now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when *men shall hate you*, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.'"

(1) "But *woe* unto you [*disciples*] that are *rich*! for ye are receiving your consolation." (See Greek.) Thus, present gain is future woe: *consolation in this age involves the loss of it in the age to come.*

(2) "Woe unto you [*disciples*] that are *full*; for ye shall hunger."

(3) "Woe unto you [*disciples*] that *laugh now*: for ye shall mourn and weep."

(4) "Woe unto you [*disciples*] when *all men shall speak well of you*: for so did their fathers to the *false prophets*:" Luke vi. 20—26.

Does this page meet the eye of a persecutor?

Friend, your guilt is extreme! God's patience is indeed great. 'Tis mercy's wide field now. He allows you to reproach, revile, curse, slander, hinder, threaten the life of His saints. But the time is brief! He is coming in flames of fire to recompense trouble to the troublers of His people! to send on them eternal destruction. Pause! Turn! Repent, while yet you may!

CHRISTIANS, SALT.

Matt. v. 13—16.

13. "Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt shall have become foolish,* wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot by men."

THE preceding paragraph showed to us Christians as related to the Kingdom of Christ in *the future day*. This teaches us their position, as regards *the world now*. It gives a view of the body in general, with its purpose as designed of God.

When a new substance is discovered, we wish to know what are its uses. Gutta percha is found in one of the isles of the East. 'Of what use is it?' is the natural inquiry. If we could only tell for what purposes God designed it, we should be glad to employ it in those. Our Lord, then, in the paragraph before us, unfolds to us God's design in raising up the new body of Jesus' disciples.

He would hereby encourage His people under trial. In the last verse, Jesus described His followers as reviled,

* Μωρανθη.

rejected, persecuted. Of what use could such a body be ? Of very great service.

They are compared to that useful, necessary article—salt. That substance is in its nature incorruptible : the opposite to leaven, which easily corrupts, and excites fermentation and corruption in other bodies.

Its taste is peculiar, its texture transparent, its colour white, its uses manifold.

(1) The taste of salt is pleasant to *men*. Our meals would be insipid indeed without it. (2) It was also a sacred thing, pleasant to *God*. "Every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt : neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering : *with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt :*" Lev. ii. 13. And this too, when of leaven it is said, "Ye shall burn no *leaven* nor any *honey*, in any offering of the Lord made by fire:" ver. 11.

(3) It is a great *anti-corruptionist*. Applied to meat, it corrects its native tendency to putridity ; and preserves it sweet as an article of human food, for a considerable time. We find salt used, on one occasion, by Elisha, in order to heal bitter and corroding waters. "And the men of the city said unto Elisha, 'Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the ground barren.' And he said, 'Bring me a new cruse, and put *salt therein*.' And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the water, and cast the salt in there, and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters : there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.' So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha, which he spake : " 2 Kings ii. 19—22. Here is a greater than Elisha, throwing into the world's bitter waters a nobler salt. Does he

anticipate then the healing of the waters? Nay, but rather the corruption of the salt!

Jesus, however, is speaking of real converts, true disciples. Mere professors but little check the evil of the world. But one begotten again of God, and acting out the life of God, cannot but affect the world by his (1) prayers, his (2) words, his (3) life. He is unlike the evil world; of a spirit loftily above it. He is not of earth, but a citizen of heaven: a son of God.

The "earth" is corrupt. The tendency is to grow worse and worse. Each evil man encourages his neighbour in evil. The tendency of selfishness and of irreligion is to grow bolder in word and deed, as each one sees himself upheld by the countenance of others.

This tendency is resisted by the disciples of Jesus. While they are genuine, they display to the world not only justice and truth, in opposition to injustice and falsehood; but mercy, love, heavenly-mindedness, forgiveness of evil. Much as the world may hate the light thus cast on its evil, it is checked by it. Historically, this has been the fact, wherever true Christianity has penetrated. It stayed the awful corruption of manners that threatened, in the days of the Roman emperors, to dissolve the state. Introduced amid the savage Fijians in our day, it has removed the horrors of cannibalism, and the revolting abominations of heathenism.

The "YE" is emphatic. Jesus is raising up a *new agent*. He is not restoring the old: not re-seasoning the law's disciples. He is creating a new body, which, while it is to be in contact with the world, is not to be of it, but above it; heavenly in its birth, its aims, its doctrines.

Mark then the result! *This throws Israel out of its ancient place as God's witness.* The chosen nation

was no longer to Christ's eye, antiseptic: no longer pleasant to God. It was corrupt, like the Gentiles around. It needed itself to be wrought on for good. It had but the form of godliness, without the power. Nor does God mean to restore Israel to its post of testimony during the present dispensation. "YE [*not Israel*] are the salt of the earth."

How large are the views of our Lord! His disciples are not to be salt of the Jewish nation only, but of the earth at large. He foresaw that His truth would make its way through every nation, and affect each in turn.

But what was to be the issue of this new exhibition of God's goodness? What the ultimate effect on the earth? In general, the reformer is loud in praises of his movement. The discoverer of any principle or substance exalts the virtues of the body he brings before us, of the benefits of the principle he offers.

'Tis not thus with Jesus; as neither was it with Moses. Moses, while leading Israel into the land, yet foresees, not the triumph of the truths of which Israel was made the keeper; but of the falsehoods which they were sent to witness against. Even thus Jesus depicts to the salt the result of the loss of its characteristics.

Does salt ever lose its taste? It has been questioned. MAUNDRELL believed that he had found an instance of it on his journey to Jerusalem, in the Valley of Salt.

But whether the thing be true physically or not, 'tis most evidently possible morally. May Christians lose their distinctive principles, and desert the line of conduct which they are taught to pursue? Can they become cold toward God and Christ, and ardent for the world's prizes? 'Tis most sadly evident that the thing is not possible only, but actually fulfilled in past days, and

exhibited in our own. Where are the Churches of Asia? What say our Lord's epistles to them? The tasteless salt which MAUNDRELL found, bore the same *appearance* as ordinary salt. So Christians may preserve toward God and the world the same general form, while yet the spirit has evaporated.

'Tis in its *peculiarity* that the usefulness of salt consists. Add meat to meat, and the progress of corruption will not be checked. Mix together the worldly of one nation with the worldly of another, and evil only is likely to be increased. Lying, theft, cheating, bribery, slander, drunkenness, fornication, quarrels, pride, malice, would be fostered. 'Tis the union, love, truthfulness, purity, zeal for good words and works wrought in Christians by the Holy Spirit, which counteract these evils. If then the world cries out of Christians,—'They are such a *strange peculiar set!*'—it is a good sign. The salt has some taste still.

Jesus then, lest we should be proud, depicts to us the effects of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in corrupting the disciples. They would fall from the high station in which they were set, and sink to the level of the flesh and the world. The salt would 'become foolish.' Its strangeness, its peculiarity, its unlikeness to the world is its wisdom. These are its witness that it has not degenerated. They are its pledge that it shall not be useless in its effects on the world. But its becoming like to the world is its folly. Each step in that direction is destroying its strength, is displeasing to God, and impairing to its testimony to the world.

As the Christian body sinks to the world's level, it is of course unable to raise the world toward heaven and toward God. As it loses the power of godliness, so is its effect on the worldly lost. At length the critic

world cries out,—'What is the good of your much boasted system? What the use of your cumbrous apparatus of organization, of rites, and doctrines? We do not see that there is much difference between us and you? You are pursuing the world and its prizes, as heartily as ourselves!'

Thus these words of our Lord run parallel with the parable of the leaven. In *that*, the Saviour foretold the corruption of the true doctrine and practice, by the old principles of the flesh and the world. He does the same here.

But if this internal decline and decay take place, how shall the evil be remedied? "Wherewith shall it be salted?" Salt stays the corruption of other substances. But if it lose its virtue, how is it to be restored? Salt is used to give taste to things insipid. But if its own taste be gone, how shall it be brought back?

The question implies its hopelessness. There is *no* remedy. The fallen Christian dispensation will not be restored. The lapsed general body will be removed from its place of testimony. Israel will be brought back to its own land and become God's witness to the Gentiles. But, of the tasteless salt, Jesus says, "It is thenceforth *good for nothing.*"

How far is this from the triumphant attitude which uninstructed men would ascribe to it! Its end will be, not glory, but disgrace! Far from recovering a fallen world to God, itself will meet the contempt of the world, as useless, and incapable of fulfilling the original design of the most High.

Substances of many kinds, if they fail in being serviceable to man in their higher uses, are yet adapted for lower purposes. Here are some baskets of grapes. They are too unripe to eat, or to dry as raisins. But

they will make wine. Or are they unfit for that purpose? Will they no longer make wine? They will furnish a fine vinegar. Or are they too corrupted to be employed even for that use? They will make the best manure for the vines.

But 'tis not thus with salt. If it lose its highest uses, it has no inferior ones to which it may be applied. "It is fit neither for the land, nor yet for the dunghill."

What then is its destiny?

1. "To be cast out." While it keeps its taste, its place is *within the house*. But, as soon as its savour toward God is gone, He will reject it from its place of testimony. Thus Jesus threatens the last of the seven churches. "So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I am about to *spue thee out of my mouth*:" Rev. iii. 16. (Greek.)

It will also "be trodden under foot of men." "Men" here (and generally in the Sermon on the Mount) stand opposed to "disciples." They answer to "the world" of John's gospel and epistles. As Jesus' followers would be spread throughout the world, so will the world at last be cognizant of their loss of the original Christian spirit. The watchful disciples will be stolen away from earth by Christ; the tasteless residue will be exposed to the world's just contempt.

There are two *perfections* of salt, when *good*. There are two *rejections* of it, when *worthless*. Both God and men will refuse it. It will be deposed from its eminent place of testimony and usefulness, with scorn of its failure.

Of this result, Israel in a former dispensation is a witness. As long as it upheld the truth of the One Invisible Godhead against the idolatry and polytheism

of the nations, God would prosper it; and He fulfilled His word. But the Most High threatened also, that if it became disobedient and polluted with idolatry like the Gentiles around, it should be removed from its position of glory, and be despised and scattered. "When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall *corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image*, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of Jehovah thy God to provoke Him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish off this land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it: ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And *the Lord shall scatter you among the nations*, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you:" Deut. iv. 25—27.

14. "Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on a mountain * cannot be hid."

The original state of nature was darkness. It was the act of God to call light into being. Even thus fallen human nature is utterly dark to its highest interests.

(1) It is ignorant of the attributes and character of *God*. Its worship is vain, cruel, lustful. (2) It is ignorant of *man's* state, duty, and destiny. What lies beyond the present visible scene, it cannot know. Death is to it a 'leap in the dark.' Whether man will survive his departure hence, it cannot tell. This ignorance the wisest of the heathen have confessed with words of sadness. But darkness is not only painful, 'tis dangerous. He who moves about a house at night is liable to fall from its upper story, and to break his

* *Opāus*.

limbs. He who travels in the dark along the road is liable to fall into a river, or a pit. He who moves in darkness on the sea is in danger of striking on the rocks, or of being run down by another vessel. How much more terrible is darkness in things spiritual?

Jesus then came, as God's sun of righteousness, to enlighten the world. Christians are beams of His light. "Once darkness, now are they *light* in the Lord:" Eph. v. 8.

The "YE" is emphatic here also. These words affect directly and designedly the place of Israel. That nation was of old God's luminary. "Keep, therefore, [these statutes and judgments] and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people:" Deut. iv. 6. "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, And to make thee *high above all nations which He hath made in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken:*" Deut. xxvi. 19; xxviii. 1. But now that the Saviour constitutes *His disciples* the light of the world, He removes Israel from occupying that place. God's own nation is now darkness, needing illumination, as truly as the Gentiles! Jesus therefore raises up a new luminary. He came not, merely to trim the wick of the old lamp.

His disciples are "the light of the world." Their doctrine was to instruct man concerning God, and himself. Their practice was to show him, how to please God. They were to be the remedy, not only against human *corruption*, as *salt*; but against human *ignorance*, as *light*.

This is true to the present day. Christians are the

world's real standard of right and wrong. Most are guided, in their views of good and evil, by the conduct of their neighbours. 'Is it right to go to concerts and balls?' 'It can't be wrong: for Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Harrison do it, and they make a high profession of religion.'

Observe then, Christians! You are not to borrow the world's principles of conduct, or to be guided by its views of God, and of human nature. *You are to take these from God and to exhibit them to men.* Then be not inconsistent; professing indeed the principles of Christ, but acting on those of the world! Be not seeking the world's pleasures, honours, gains! That is not to give them God's light, but to borrow their darkness.

Jesus next compares the body of his followers to a city planted on a mountain. From the Mount of Beatitudes in Galilee the white walls of Safet can be seen. If Safet was not then in existence, some other might be in view, exemplifying the truth of our Lord's words. A city in a hollow may be shut out from the traveller's view, till he is just on the brink of the basin. But when lifted up above the level so loftily, it commands the eye from all quarters.

Jesus then presents His disciples,—(1) as a *public* body, never withdrawn from observation, having unfriendly critics always near. He exhibits them, also, as (2) an *elevated* body. The Gentiles lived down in a glen: Israel on the level plain. But Christians, as resting on Messiah, must needs be elevated. They are one with Him, justified by His righteousness, possessed of His Spirit. Their position, as given of God, is to be "in heavenly places in Christ." Israel was *seeking justification*: these *possessed it*. Israel was made possessor

of *earthly blessings, in earthly places*. The Christian, of *spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ*: Eph. i.

Believers, we might wish that we could live in solitude, that we knew none, were not known or heeded by any. But it cannot be. The city on the mountain cannot be hid. God has forbidden it. Of sons of God much is expected. We had need be doing what is right: for all unconsciously on our part, we are affecting others. Our spirit and tempers cannot be hid. The assembly held by Elijah on Carmel's top must have been seen and noted for miles around; the descending fire must have been beheld far and wide.

15. "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but upon the lamp-stand, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16. So let your light shine before men: that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in the heavens."

Jesus came not to insert a new wick to the old lamp, but to kindle a new light. He here argues, from the acts and designs of man, to those of God. How does man act towards a lamp he has lit?

First, negatively. He does *not* put it under the bushel-basket; for that were to cover up the light he has raised, and to undo his design. Nor does he set it in a vault,* for though it might shine there, yet it would be useless, as not being man's abode. How completely, then, did the hermits and monks of old run counter to this expressed design of the Saviour!

But positively, he has a place prepared beforehand for the lamp's reception. He has designed an elevated stand on which to set it, so that it may best subserve his design in kindling it. There it will "give light to all in the house."

* Εν κρυπτῷ. Luke xi. 33.

Man is a lamp; but by nature a lamp *unlit*, not fulfilling his purpose in creation. But the God Who regenerates one of our lost race, kindles him. Fire from heaven has lighted him. Why then was he lit? Not for his own sake solely; but to give light to others. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself:" Rom. xiv. 7. God caused us to be begotten from above, that we might be useful to others.

As the design of man in kindling the lamp* is best attained when it is raised, and set on a permanent stand, so is God's intent, in renewing the soul, best attained when the individual believer joins the assembly of Christ's people. The Church of Christ is the lamp-stand: Rev. i. 20. God's work in the heart is a secret thing. But He requires, that His illuminated ones should confess the Son of God with their mouth. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness; and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation:" Rom. x.

By public profession, and private practice of holiness, believer, you fulfil God's design in renewing you. Let your conduct in your family adorn the cause of Christ. Give light to all that are in the house!

By two comparisons the Redeemer would display to us our calling. As a *mountain-city*, we *cannot* be hid, if we *would*. As a lighted lamp, we *should* not be hid, if we *could*. The very intent of our Owner Who lit us was that we should be seen, and make others to see. We are to give light to the dark, in the absence of the sun.

You are not, believer, to be a *secret disciple*. You

* The ordinary lamp of Greece and some other countries was a hand-lamp, in shape like a slipper, with the light at the pointed end.

are not to stand aloof from the Church of Christ, because of others' inconsistency. You are not to be kept from confessing Jesus, because you are afraid you may fall, after making a profession. *Present duty is our part.* Conjectures about the future are not our guides. Even if a prophet could assure you, that you would fall foully three years hence, it would make no difference in your *present* duty of joining the Church of God.

God does not mean you to stand alone. United in Christian fellowship each is strongest. On God's prepared stand the lamp is safest. Join, then, the Church of Christ, if you have not done so.

And, while there, shine like the lamp, quietly. The lamp regards not the presence of one or of many. Not by fits and jets do its rays stream forth, but steadily. So let your light shine before "men." Let the worldly see that God has bestowed on you a new nature, and that your principles and practice are superior to theirs. Christ desires, that His people should be zealous of good works. They are the rays of light, that stream from the lit lamp. We are not indeed to do the works, in order to be seen of men. That is afterwards forbid. But here the Saviour, after forewarning disciples of the trials of the Christian profession, warns us against the opposite danger of cowardice.

This quiet performance of good works glorifies "your Father in heaven." It is due to His gracious kindling of your soul. The light, the praise are His. You are begotten *again*. Your first father was of the earth. Your second Father is on high. From this His act of grace He takes His new title. To the Jew God said, "I am the Lord [Jehovah] thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here is mercy nobler far. Let then the

praise of God's great work redound to Him! Let men confess your standard and practice far above theirs! Let them seek to be renewed themselves! How joyful, Christian, if you are made the instrument of bringing some to eternal life!

Reader, are you still unconverted? Born but once? If so, you are a lamp *unlit*. You have never yet begun to fulfil the great end of your creation. You have been living to yourself. You speak, by your evil works, of your first father, and of the fall. You are dark amidst the dark. The blackness of darkness for evermore will be your lot, if you persevere!

CHRIST'S RELATION TO LAW.

Matt. v. 17—20.

17. "Think not that I came to undo the law or the prophets : I came not to undo, but to fulfil. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall not pass away from the law, till all take place. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed (the righteousness) of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

THIS paragraph is peculiarly important towards the understanding of the whole sermon. It is the Thermopylæ through which, when we have won our way, the whole land lies open. But it is a truth which lies hard beset by errors on both sides. I request, therefore, the reader's candid and prayerful attention.

The two previous paragraphs have given us the attitude of the *disciples*, first in relation to the future kingdom, and next to the present dispensation, as God's witnesses to an evil world. *This* gives us the Great Teacher's

aspects : first, as looking back towards *the law* ; and then as looking forward to *the kingdom* and the eternal state beyond it.

The analysis of the present paragraph is as follows :—

In ver. 17 Jesus discovers His relation towards the law and the prophets ; first negatively, then both negatively and positively.

The consequences of His maintaining the law and the prophets are next shown :—

1. In ver. 18, how they affect God's own work, as Creator and Preserver of all things.

2. Then, in ver. 19, 20, we are taught the effects of this principle, when Christ shall judge men, at His appearing and kingdom.

3. In ver. 19 we see, how the breach of the Mosaic ceremonial law affected all those of that day.

4. In ver. 20, are shown the effects (in all the present dispensation) of refusing to recognize those changes in the moral standard, now first introduced by Christ.

Jesus' two-fold attitude, as respects the law, affects the millennial judgment in two ways :

1. Because Jesus sanctions the ceremonial law, the breach of it is punishable.

2. Because He elevates the moral standard, the old is left destitute of reward.

Ver. 18 takes up the *negative* part of the preceding verse, and shows that Jesus is maintaining creation itself, only in subordination to the law.

19. "I came *not* to destroy the law." 'Whoever therefore shall, as a teacher, break the smallest of its ceremonial requirements, shall be a loser thereby, even if admitted into the kingdom of Messiah.'

Ver. 20 takes up the *positive* aspect of the Saviour's coming :—'I came to elevate the standard of the law :

whoever therefore shall ignore, theoretically, or practically, the raising of the standard thus sanctioned, shall not enter the kingdom.' That is the general sense of the passage. Let us now consider it minutely.

17. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets."

This idea might arise in a thoughtful mind, from perceiving—

1. How different, and in some respects *contrasted*, were the principles of blessing now put forth, when compared with the blessings of the law. 2. That Jesus' words removed Israel from its previous place, as God's witness in the earth. It is treated now, as something corrupt and dark. Its post of testimony is made over to the newly-created body of Jesus' disciples. 3. 'This kingdom of the heavens,' again, which He preached, was it something taught by Moses and the prophets? or the promise of one hostile to them? The idea might take its origin from our Lord's previous words: but much more was it likely to spring from the sentiments which follow, in which Jesus seems to contrast Himself and His teaching, with those of Moses. It is then of the utmost moment for us to know the position which Jesus occupies, in relation to Moses and the prophets.

"I came not to destroy, but to fill them full." "I came." Jesus then is "He that should *come*." He came "in the name of the Lord;" He was the one for whose advent Israel and the Gentiles were to look. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. . . . Then said I, Lo, I come:" Psa. xl. 6, 7. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly *come* to His temple:" Matt. iii. 1.

"Not to destroy, but to fill them full."

How to fulfil them? There are three different views on this great point.

1. The Gnostics of old, taught that Jesus came as the *antagonist* of Moses and the prophets. They asserted (without any proof) that Jesus' words were,— "What think ye? that I came to *fulfil* the law or the prophets? I came to *destroy*,* not to *fulfil*." So said Marcion. Such persons saw, that Jesus is in some points opposed to words of the law. They set the words of Jesus in contrast to the law: and though He professed, and proved by acts, that He was no enemy to Moses, they would not acknowledge it.

2. The Reformers generally take the opposite side. They maintain, that in all the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord is only opposing Himself to the *mistakes, or wilful errors of the scribes*: and that His only intention is, to set Moses and the prophets free from the perverse incrustations of the petrifying spring of Jewish tradition. He left the Decalogue as He found it, the rule of life to us, as to Israel of old.

3. On the contrary, I think it can be shown, that neither of these views is true, though *both contain portions of truth*. Jesus, I believe, is upholding two seemingly opposed truths.†

* To 'destroy,' was to proclaim men loosed from their obligation. Jesus puts "doing and teaching" as contrary to destroying them. *καταλναι*, the contrary to *οικοδομειν*.

† The twofoldness of truth is a great barrier to its reception. Men are perversely one-sided; and hence they stumble again and again over God's word: they are obliged to cut and curtail, to deny and pervert what is evidently said of God, instead of giving to each truth its place. (1) The Reformers are obliged to explain away Jesus' manifest opposition to the law. (2) The Gnostics deny His manifest upholding of Moses, both by word and deed. Let us be wiser, and give to each part its place.

(1) The law and prophets came from God. Jesus in the last beatitude had approved the holy men of the law. They should have part in the glory of His resurrection and kingdom. The *kingdom* which He foretold was hinted by the law; vividly foretold by the prophets. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, implies that both the ceremonial and the moral commands are given of God. He speaks of the altar and its gifts. He owns it, as the place of meeting with God. As soon as He comes down from the Mount, He bids the cleansed leper carry his gift to the priest, as Moses commanded.

(2) But the law and the prophets were not perfect : * Heb. vii. 19 ; viii. "The law made *nothing perfect*." Moses in foretelling a prophet to come after him, to whom all were to listen under penalty of being destroyed from among the people (Deut. xviii. 15 ; Acts iii. 22, 23), implied the same thing. The prophet who was to follow him would not simply recall their attention to what had been before said by himself. This was the "time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 10), when the laws which arose from Israel's hardness of heart were to be swept away : Mark x. 6.

(3) Jesus then came to fill up what was lacking in both the law and the prophets. He discovers to us new principles. He raises up a new body which is to carry out those principles, animated by hope of the kingdom as its reward.

He is the new legislator, like Moses. He is far above the law. Where its old principles clash with His superior ones, He sets them aside ; but He does not condemn the law. He came not to take it down,

* 'But the contrary is affirmed, Psa. xix. 7.' It was affirmed, with relation to the state of things then existing : not with reference to Christ's after lessons.

stone from stone (*καταλναι*), as a fort built by an enemy. He came, as the true Priest, admitting what was right, to fill up the half-filled lamp of the law with the oil of heaven.*

But we must consider more particularly this word "fulfil." The Saviour fulfilled the law in more ways than one. He fulfilled it in one way, as (1) SURETY for His people ; in another way, as (2) their TEACHER.†

(1) He fulfilled the law as the *Surety* or Doer, by obeying its precepts, and suffering its penalty. He accomplished also what in it was prophetic of His humiliation ; whether in types, or direct prophecy.

But that is not the sense which is in question here.

(2) Our Lord now appears as *Teacher* of His people. And the fulfilment of the law spoken of is practical,—the raising the requirements of duty above the law's level. He is setting up a loftier standard than was known to the old covenant. The foundation-principle of the law is JUSTICE ; that of the Sermon on the Mount, is MERCY : John i. 17. Justice is a part of the character of God, and Israel was to reflect it. But love is God's highest perfection, and it is in connexion with the new view of God, that Jesus introduces His new commands. This part of God's character the disciples of Christ are to imitate.

Our part then in the Sermon on the Mount is practical. We are first to own Christ as our Surety

* He fills up the *reward*, making it "the kingdom of heaven ;" and the *penalty*, making it Gehenna. Here are the "better promises : " Heb. viii. 6. Here is James' "*perfect law of liberty* : " James i. 25.

† Or we may state it, as Jesus does presently afterwards : He fulfils it as (1) the DOER, and (2) the TEACHER. It is with the last we have here to do.

and righteousness, and then to sit at Jesus' feet as the Teacher, and to look up to Him as the Great Giver of reward in the kingdom.

18. "For verily I say unto you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall pass away from the law, till all have taken place."

This verse exhibits several truths, which must be stated distinctly.

1. The heaven and the earth are to last but for a time.*

2. The law and the prophets † are to have their fulfilment in the present heaven and earth : and are to pass away after such fulfilment.

3. The heavens and the earth are inferior in importance to the law and the prophets. For the duration of the heavens and the earth depends upon the law's fulfilling.

Thus much on the general meaning of the verse.

The "jot" of the law refers to 'Yod,' the least

* Or, more briefly, thus : (1) Heaven and earth shall pass away : (2) so shall the law and the prophets. (3) But not till they are perfectly fulfilled. (4) And the heaven and the earth are abiding, till that point of time, as the stage whereon these words of God are to be fulfilled. So Luke xvi. 16, 17; Matt. xxiv. 35.

Jesus seems to speak thus obscurely, of set design, because the disciples were not ready for it. Is this the syntax of the verse? 'No jot shall pass away from the law till all is fulfilled. Then all of it shall pass away together, and the heavens and the earth with it.' Are not the two views contemporaneous? 'When all is done (*παντα γενηται*) the heavens and earth shall pass.'

† Why does Jesus omit "the prophets" on the second occasion? Is it because the prophets (Isaiah at least) foretell the final state as well as the millennium?

letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from which our word 'jot' is derived. The 'tittle' refers to the small point by which some of the similar letters are distinguished from one another : as the Daleth, ך, from the Resh, ר. The tittle is a small part of a letter, and so smaller than the 'jot,' which is a whole letter.

Now, as both the law and the prophets witness to the millennial reign of Messiah, that must come to pass, ere the earth is destroyed.

In these words Jesus speaks as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He assures us, that the earth we tread and the magnificent retinue of worlds which line the sky, are only hand-maids to God's words. That little book tells us why they were made, and on what principles they are sustained. The philosopher imagines the stars made to last for ever. He admires them, but despises *this book*, though it be their master and regulator. We know that they are short-lived : that their existence depends on the accomplishment of God's purposes upon this earth : aye, so puny a speck it is in the face of the universe ! The heavenly bodies are to herald, by fearful sights and signs, the coming of the Great Day and of Our Lord : and after His millennial reign is over, they are to flee away from the judgment-seat of their Monarch ; and, after man's destiny is settled, to be seen no more.

How Jesus magnifies the law !* To fulfil that, heaven and earth were made and are preserved ! Not the least portion of it but has its use, and glory, and fulfilment.

* The law then is useful, and to a certain extent perfect. It is not so, only in reference to 'the glory which excellet.' As no vein or nerve, no small portion of the human body but has its use, so still more true is it in God's word.

19. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

This is a second deduction from the declaration of Jesus, that He came not to destroy the law, but to complete it. As He so values the law, He will, when He comes as Judge, punish the smallest breach of it. He will pass against the misdoer His sentence, as the Monarch of the millennial kingdom. The case supposed, is a breach of one of "these least commandments." *What commandments?*

1. Some have imagined, that Jesus is referring to those commandments of the sermon which He afterwards utters. But no! Jesus says, "*these* least commandments" of *the law*, which He has already noticed under the figurative expressions of "jot," or "tittle." It is to *these* then that He refers. It is to disciples of the law that He is now addressing Himself.

What then are the least commandments of the law? The law is divided generally into two great portions.

1. THE MORAL. 2. THE CEREMONIAL.

Of these, the moral part is superior to the ceremonial, as the Saviour on several occasions decided.

1. In His answer to the scribe's question—"Of what kind is the greatest command of the law?" He replied, that the love of God and of our neighbour were the two greatest precepts: Matt. xxii. 36, 40.

2. When the ceremonial clashed with the moral, He gave the preference to the moral. "I will have *mercy* and not *sacrifice*:" Matt. ix. 13; xii. 7.

3. He rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for the contrary choice. They made much of the ceremonial, and trod under foot the moral. For this He calls them "blind guides," and affirms, "justice, mercy,

and the love of God" to be the chief things: Matt. xxiii. 23, 24. The Saviour therefore here binds upon His Jewish disciples *the observance of all the ceremonial commands of the law*: as He does also in Matt. xxiii. 1, 3.

In proof of this, He traces for us the result to a teacher of his personally breaking one of the *least* of the ceremonial commands. For, amongst the ceremonial commands themselves, there was a difference of importance. The command about the bird's nest was not of such weight, as the law concerning the daily sacrifice. The Jewish teacher then, it is supposed, breaks the law, and teaches men to do the same. To make the case simple, this is supposed to be his only defect.

Here observe: 1. The breadth of our Lord's words. By them Israel is put out of its place. He says not: 'And teach *Israel* so,' but 'teach *men* so.' That is, Israel is set on the same level as the Gentile.

2. Observe also, the greater responsibility of a teacher. If *he* goes astray, he leads others aside, and will have to answer for it. If faithful therefore, in consequence of his greater usefulness, he would have the greater reward.

3. He shall, it is supposed, "teach *men so*;" that is, to break the law as he does. Our *creed* and doctrine generally descend to the level of our *practice*. Few can stand out long against others' just reproaches of them, for their inconsistency. Hence, because *doctrine* is the most easily altered, it is lowered to meet *conduct*. Jesus, in these words, is not speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees: for they were zealous for the exact observance of the letter in the minute points of the law. He is supposing a case, to show the binding character of the

ceremonial law in His eyes. None but the enacting authority can annul a law once made.

“He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”
By whom shall he be called ‘*least?*’

1. Some suppose, that he will be called so by *men*, and *now*. His misconduct will at length be seen, and then resented, by men’s lightly regarding his teaching.

2. But, I believe, it refers primarily, as it certainly does with vastly greater force, to *Jesus as the Judge*, and to the *time of His coming*. His word will decide the place occupied by each in the kingdom. “Such as are *blessed* of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that be *curst* of Him shall be cut off:” Psa. xxxvii. 22. After Jesus’ decision regarding him, his fellow-heirs, all through the time of Christ’s reign, esteem him so, as the consequence of Jesus’ decision.

His being “least in the kingdom” does not suppose that he will be *excluded* from millennial bliss altogether, as some have thought; but only that he will take a low rank in it, because of the offence. “The least in the kingdom,” Jesus said, should be greater than John the Baptist: Matt. xi. 11. By these words our Lord certainly did not mean, that those outside the kingdom should be greater than John.

What is meant by “the kingdom of heaven?”

1. Certainly it does not mean the Church. For the party supposed is a teacher of the law and its ceremonies. Now Paul bids disciples to beware of the teachers of the law.

2. No! Jesus is speaking throughout of one time; of the day of recompence to each according to his works; and therefore of the millennial kingdom. This is proved also, by the close of the next verse: where the offence there stated will shut out from

‘entering the kingdom.’ This phrase is always used of the time of reward. Compare Matt. xxv. 21; Heb. iv. 3—11; Acts xiv. 22; Luke xxiv. 26.

“But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” “Doing,” in our Lord’s words is set first, as being the chief point. “Teaching” comes afterwards. The voice of deeds is the strongest. Thus, also, we learn what our Lord means by “destroying,” and its contrary, “building up.” Destroying is effected by breaking the law, and then maintaining the breach by hostile words and teaching. “Building up” is effected by contrary deeds. Our Lord, as His people’s Surety, so fulfilled the law and prophets. He *did* as they commanded: He *taught* others to do, as they required. Witness His words to the healed leper, His miracle enabling Peter to pay the tribute-money; with other cases of like kind.

The Saviour teaches, in the above words, that great lesson which occurs so often:—the differences of degrees in the kingdom of glory. And those degrees will not be arbitrarily assigned, but on a fixed, well-known principle,—“According as his work shall be.” Thus Jesus has shewn His value for the law. The offender against its least claim shall be a loser in that new dispensation of reward which He came to proclaim. He Himself, as the chief Doer and Teacher, shall be first and chief in the kingdom.

‘Ought *we* then to keep the law and its ceremonies? Shall *we* be subject to loss, if we do not?’ No, we “are not under law, but under grace:” Rom. vi. 14, 15. This question was once tried, and decided in our favour (Acts xv.). These words of the Saviour applied to men of the law, up to the date of Christ’s resurrection. After that, Peter is taught, that the distinction of meats

is done away; and Paul assures us, that for a Gentile to receive circumcision, is to put himself away from Christ, and to lose his part in the millennial glory: Gal. iv., v.

20. "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed (that of) the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

A very solemn word! Let us pray to understand it aright!

This verse refers, in its opening word "For," to the last clause of ver. 17. 'I came to fill up the deficiencies of the law and the prophets.' 'For I tell you,' &c. The two references to the two parts of Jesus' assertion are marked by the words, "For I say unto you." "*For I say unto you*: Till heaven and earth pass, no jot," &c. (ver. 18). "I came not to destroy, I came to fulfil, *for I say unto you*, That except your righteousness," &c. (ver. 20).

"I say unto you." This marks the greatness of the speaker. He tells us secrets which had else been hid till the judgment day. *How* these offences would affect us then, could not else be known: or on what it is that the continuance of heaven and earth is suspended. All rests on His assertion. Faith clasps it.

1. What is 'our righteousness,'—we ask? 2. What that of the Scribes? *How* must it exceed theirs, that we may enter millennial joy? Righteousness is conformity to law. It is a doing, with intention of heart, what the law requires. Our righteousness is either—(1) *imputed*, received by faith; or (2) *practical*, the acted holiness of a sanctified life. It is either another's or our own. (1) Imputed righteousness is not in question here. Jesus is not calling unbelievers to

faith, but believers to action. Imputed righteousness must already be possessed, ere we are disciples: and it is disciples that Jesus is addressing.

This threatening of our Lord is the immediate consequence of the elevation of the standard. Just so was it, when the government of our country introduced new weights and measures. The old were thrown out; there were penalties annexed to using them. 'Except your bushel exceed the old standard, your goods are liable to be seized.' So an inspector might say, 'I am come to enlarge the standard of the bushel, and as a consequence, let me tell you, that any selling by the old bushel will be liable to a fine.' 'Twas no hostile authority that set up the new bushel, and set aside the old. 'Twas the imperial decree of the realm, the decision of the constitution of England; not the imposition of some conqueror of England. 'Twas the same authority that recognized the old.

(2) Jesus then is speaking of our obedience or practical righteousness. Disciples' righteousness then differs from that of the *Scribes* and Pharisees, in its *standard*, by owning Jesus as the Great Law-giver, and His word as our rule. It has a special reference to the Saviour's declaration, that He came to elevate the level of the moral commands. Justice was Moses' demand—Mercy is Christ's.

We must then, in order to enter the millennial kingdom, admit the superior tone of the commands of the Sermon on the Mount. This comes first, as the *doctrinal* basis of our obedience. We shall not in our conduct obey, what we do not in understanding and heart admit.

2. We must next *obey*, or carry out in our lives the new commands. This is the *practical* super-

structure. Thus will our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes.

1. For the Scribes denied the new standard, and admitted only the authority of Moses. They refused the word of Jesus. They would not allow others to own it, if they could help it. They distinguished themselves as "Moses' disciples:" John ix. 26—29. This was the *doctrinal* basis of their righteousness:—"God spake to Moses:" the commands of the law are to be observed.

2. They sought (some of them sincerely, no doubt) to keep the law. The law was their standard: it they aimed to keep. The teaching of the Scribes was their instruction in righteousness. If they had arrived at perfection, it had been perfection of justice. Denying the new standard, of course they refused to act it out. Thus both their creed and their practice would exclude them from the kingdom.

But the Saviour warns disciples, that their righteousness must exceed this righteousness. It must exceed the old righteousness in these two great points.

We shall not exceed the Scribes' and Pharisees' righteousness, except we take a higher standard than theirs. Such as the height of our target is, such will be our aim. In short, Jesus teaches us, *that a perfect observance of the ten commands of Moses will not admit into His millennial kingdom.* He who would attain the kingdom, must own, that Jesus has heightened, and rightfully, the demands of the law and the prophets; and must conform his conduct thereto. His (1) *standard*, and (2) his *practice* must both be above those of the Scribes. If we own no higher standard than the Decalogue, our practice will not exceed that of some of the Scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of the

Pharisee then assumed the (1) standard of Moses' law. (2) His obedience was that required by it.*

Before Jesus came, to keep the law was enough. But to keep it as our measure still, is to deny Jesus' legislation, and filling up the imperfections of the law.

An example of a disciple throwing aside the righteousness of the law, taking a higher standard, and seeking a loftier prize, is given us in Phil. iii. There you have imputed righteousness accepted, as setting a man at the starting-post: ver. 3—9. Then suffering and holiness are desired, as the way to the first resurrection, and the prize (verses 10, 14): "That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death: if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead. (Greek). Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Thus the Saviour has exhibited to us the two great portions of the law,—]. THE CEREMONIAL. 2. THE MORAL.

1. He instructs us first, what would be the result of a breach of *the ceremonial.* That portion is left where it was.

* Our Lord seems to have hinted at the two points, of *doctrine* and *practice*, by speaking first of the "Scribes," who taught Moses as their standard: and then of the *Pharisees*, the strictest sect in *obedience* of those under law.

2. He teaches us next, that the *moral* part of the law is elevated by Himself: and He assures us, that an ignoring of this, a consequent lower standard, with a practice reaching only to the height of the old covenant, will exclude, *not from eternal life*, but *from His millennial kingdom*.

Both Jesus' disciples of that day and the Pharisees observed, and were taught to observe, the *ceremonial* law. In *that*, therefore, the difference would not lie. It must then be found in this,—that Jesus elevated the demands of the *moral*, beyond Moses: and the disciples were to (1) *own* this righteousness of Jesus, and (2) to *obey* it. In our Lord's closing words, we find this truth confirmed. Jesus again demands both these as necessary to enter the kingdom:—"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven."

The calling Jesus—"Lord"—owns His right to command. That suffices not. There must be, beside owning the loftier standard, *obedience* to it.

Christians! eternal life is yours! of God's free gift to faith: Jesus purchased it for you by His righteousness,—“the righteousness of God.” Great is the boon: ever be God adored for it!

But that is not all. Faith has set you at Christ's feet as His disciples. You have now to learn His new sayings, which astonished those of the law, as altogether strange, unheard of, vast! Jesus came to set before you a great prize,—“the resurrection of the just,”—the kingdom of heaven. This you are to seek, and obedience to Jesus' new commands, as the way thereto. Press on then towards the mark, for the great glory set before you.

As this question is so important, I will go over the field again, starting from a somewhat different point.

WHAT WAS JESUS' ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO MOSES' LAW?

The ordinary reply is (1) That Jesus annulled the *ceremonial* and *judicial* portions of it, but re-affirmed the *moral*; only clearing away, as was needful, the corruptions of the Jewish teachers.

But this is not true; for—

1. Jesus *confirms* the *ceremonial* portions of the law: v. 19, 23; viii. 4; xxiii. 2, 3, &c.

2. He sets aside the *judicial* part. He annuls to disciples, as we shall see, the very foundation-principle of judicial law. He sets aside former enactments regarding the defence of property and person, and concerning oaths and divorce: ver. 31—48.

3. He extends the demands of the *moral* commandments of Moses, both as regards the subjects, the offences, and the penalties; as we shall presently see.

4. But since the Gospel has gone forth to the Gentiles, and Christ is risen from the dead, the ceremonial part of the law is no longer binding, even on the Jewish disciple of Christ. What portion of Moses then binds the Gentile, to whom it was never given? and who never came under it by circumcision? The Gentile is born under the law of the conscience, but not under that of Moses.*

* True it is, that at Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper, the Churchman is set under the Decalogue. But it is only by omitting a part of the words—that the Ten Commandments are made to embrace the Gentile. What says the Prayer-book? “God spake these words, and said; I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.” *The words, “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” are omitted.*

Moreover, Christ's apostles teach us that the law is a **WHOLE**. You cannot extract a part, and leave the rest. *The law curses all who do not keep every command of it*: Gal. iii. 10; James ii. 10. You cannot take the Decalogue, and refuse the sacrifices and circumcision. The Sabbath is a part of the ceremonial law; and no fire may be kindled on it, and the breaker of it is to be put to death: Ex. xxxv. 2, 3. Paul resisted circumcision with the most determined energy, because it was a taking up a portion of the ceremonial law, and that drew after it the whole: Gal. v. 2—4. "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Take up the ten commands, and you must receive also the ceremonial and judicial portions of the law as well. It refuses to be severed. The hand of God has united its parts.

The ordinary view supposes, that Jesus means to retain the Decalogue, the old standard of duty. It distinguishes our righteousness from that of the Pharisees, in that (1) *they refuse* and *we accept*, imputed righteousness. (2) Our *obedience* is better than theirs. Our Lord's command on this view, then, in substance is: 'Do you keep the Decalogue more strictly than the

God is not 'the Lord *thy* God,' of *Englishmen*. He never brought them out of Egypt. If it be said, 'Yes, He did *spiritually*,' I answer, (1) If so, then spiritualize the Decalogue throughout. Take adultery, murder, theft, as spiritual. (2) The Lord has never delivered *the English nation*, as such, from spiritual bondage. God has many believers among Englishmen. But the bulk of the nation is evil.

Pharisees!' But those most zealous for it, do not observe the whole. They break the Sabbath. Instead of keeping the day enacted in the fourth commandment, they keep another. Nor do they observe the first day of the week for the reason which God assigned for keeping the seventh. The seventh day was to be observed *because God rested thereon*. The first day is kept, *because Christ rose from the dead*.

If then Christians are the salt of the earth, because they observe the Decalogue; Israel, as keeping the whole law, is the salt of the earth in a higher degree.

Jesus, instantly after speaking of the Scribes' and Pharisees' righteousness, appeals to the law of Moses, because it was their standard. He speaks not of their *works* till the sixth chapter. He quotes the law, as the standard and ideal of their righteousness. Righteousness in the teacher has just been set forth, as consisting in *teaching* and *doing*. These words exhibit both the ideal *standard*, and the corresponding *practice*. As the laws of Moses were designed for God's earthly people, so are these of this discourse, laws for God's heavenly people.

OFFENCES BETWEEN BRETHREN.

Matt. v. 21—26.

21. "Ye heard, that it was spoken to those of old time; 'Thou shalt commit no murder: but whosoever shall commit murder, shall be in danger of the judgment.'

22. "But I say unto you, That every one who is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment: but whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, 'Moreh,' shall be in danger even to the Gehenna of fire."

WHAT the Lord Jesus intended by the superior righteousness which He demands, may now be seen in the comparison of His precepts with those of the Decalogue.

The first table of Sinai is only indirectly noticed. 1. God, through the coming of the Son, takes the new title of "Father" to the believers in Jesus. 2. The prohibition against idolatry is not named. 3. Oaths are forbid, even the most solemn ones; much more, then, all profane treatment of the name of God. 4. The Sabbath, in so far as it was *ceremonial*, was left for the present as it was. As it is *prophetic*, it is taken up and expanded in the promise of the millennial "kingdom of heaven,"—"that Sabbath-rest, which remains for the people of God."

In the second table, Jesus omits all mention of the fifth command. Though the Scribes had by their tradition greatly perverted it, He does not expose them here. This is a crucial or critical proof, that the aim of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount was not to put down the errors of the Scribes.

"It was spoken to the ancients."

On this sixth command, the main stress of the controversy must be decided.

What is our Lord correcting?

1. We say, the LAW itself. He was elevating the standard.

2. The ordinary reply is, that Jesus is restoring the Ten Commandments as originally given, and rescuing them from the false additions or subtractions of the Pharisees and Scribes.

The Decalogue was the basis of the old covenant of Sinai: Ex. xxxi. 18; xxxiv. 1, 28. "He wrote upon the tables *the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*"

Did Christ then come to restore the *old* covenant? or to bring in a *new*? "Jesus was made surety of a better testament:" Heb. vii. 22. "But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises:" Heb. viii. 6; ix. 15; xii. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28.

The Old Covenant was virtually broken, and a way of escape into the new, provided, by the ministry of John the Baptist. His call implied a renunciation of the Old Covenant; and his baptism signified a death to all hopes of justification by the law.

We inquire next,—Who are the contrasted authorities in these words of the Saviour?

1. In the view of the Reformers, the Scribes are the speakers.

2. In ours,—God on Sinai.

Two different words are used in the Greek, where our translators render by but one. “It was *said*.” “But I *say*.”

The difference should, however, be taken into the account. The first word denotes the solemn utterance by the voice of God Almighty. He *spoke* the ten commands to Israel. The others were *written* by Moses. The Greek word is the one continually used of God’s utterance: Luke ii. 24; iv. 12; Acts ii. 16; xiii. 34, &c.

Jesus therefore puts in contrast His word then by the mouth of man, to the ‘voice of Almighty God when He speaketh.’

But the next point is, I submit, the decisive one in the question. Should we render—‘It was spoken by the ancients,’—or ‘to the ancients?’

If it be right to translate—‘to those of old time,’ the other view is untenable. But it *is* right so to translate.

I. It is so translated in the other cases which occur in this sermon.

1. “How wilt thou say *to* thy brother?” vii. 4.

2. “Many will say *to* Me in that day:” ver. 22.

And constantly in other passages—

3. “It was said *to* her, The elder shall serve the younger:” Rom. ix. 12.

4. “In the place where it was said *unto* them, Ye are not my people,” &c. : Rom. ix. 26.

II. The parallelism of the Saviour’s words requires it.

‘It was spoken *to* those of old.’

‘But I say *to* you;’ not ‘*by* you.’

As the latter case denotes the audience, so does the other.

III. Had the meaning been ‘*by*,’—another form of Greek expression would have been used. “It was said *by* some:” Luke ix. 7 (*υπο*). “It was spoken of the Lord *by* the prophet.” (*υπο δια*.) Matt. i. 22; ii. 15, &c.

IV. The authorities in favour of this rendering are overwhelming.

(1) Our own translators felt diffident of their translation, as well they might; and put in the margin, ‘Or, *to* them.’ (2) Luther so renders. (3) The Greek fathers so understood the words, without, I believe, an exception.

But, if so, then “those of old time,” are not the authority commanding, but the parties addressed by authority.

Again, Who are “the men of old time?” (*αρχαιοι*.)

On the translators’ views, it must be replied,—‘The early teachers of the Pharisaic party.’

But 1. Another word is uniformly employed, where *they* are spoken of. “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the *elders*?” Matt. xv. 2. (*πρεσβυτεροι*.) “Holding the tradition of the *elders*?” “Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the *elders*?” Mark vii. 3, 5.

2. The word here used, in other places describes the ancients of the Hebrew nation, ‘Moses and the prophets.’ It was said “of others, that one of the *old* prophets was risen again:” Luke ix. 8, 19. “Moses of *old* time hath in every city them that preach him:” Acts xv. 21.

3. Had our Lord meant to designate the authority which commanded, He must have added a word defining the teachers. He must have said, ‘It was spoken by

the *Scribes* of old.' For, as it now stands, in "those of old time," all are embraced who lived in that early day, whether men or women, teachers or taught.

4. How great the antiquity of the Pharisaic teaching was, is not easy to determine: but it is confessedly much inferior to that of Moses' day. Of the two candidates then for representation by this word, the most antique is the real claimant. Then Israel at Sinai is the party in question.*

"Ye heard, that it was spoken."

The parties addressed were not present at Sinai. It was their fathers who were there. But they had "heard" the records of that time read from the Sacred Oracles, in their synagogues.

"Thou shalt do no murder."

'Kill' is too indefinite a word. It is perverted by vegetarians, as if it meant, that the life of no animal might be taken; in defiance of God's commanded sacrifices, and permission of the use of animal food.

Here then is the point to be corrected. Whence does this prohibition come?

From the Scribes? No! They are the words of the law itself.

* Alford supposes the contrast to lie between the law literalized and *misunderstood*, on the one hand; and law spiritualized and understood on the other. (1) But the law was "the letter;" and to understand it literally, was to understand aright. (2) On this theory, the corruptions of the scribes should have been cited first, as the points to be corrected: the law afterward, as the standard. (3) Where is the contrast? The *Scribes* say—"Thou shalt not kill." But the law says—what? The very same! (4) The Saviour's words would naturally have run in some such way as this. 'The Scribes—the *moderns* [not the *ancients*], say [not said.]—"Kill not"—But God said *anciently*,'—

"But whosoever shall commit murder, shall be in danger of the judgment."

The case supposed is one where homicide has been committed; the fact is certain, the motive is not determined. The accused has fled into the city of refuge. Then the question must be tried, that it might be decided, whether the fugitive had a right to the privilege of a sanctuary, or not. "They shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment." "Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, according to these judgments:" Num. xxxv. 12, 24. "And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment." Josh. xx. 5, 6.

"But I say unto you."

Here is a new authority, studiously contrasted with the former. The adversative particle 'but' introduces it. The Saviour uses the present tense. It was a doctrine now for the first time uttered. 'Tis a designed contrast to the sixth command. In order to cut off mistakes, the original command is cited in express words. The penalty is given in its substantial feature. "I say," not, "the Law says." Thus the multitudes understood our Lord. "The people were *astonished* at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes:" vii. 28, 29. There had been no wonder, had He merely recalled the words of Moses to their recollection. To appeal to the old standard, implied no authority. The Scribes were

accustomed to do that; to them He stood contrasted, both in the apprehension of the multitudes and really: Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

When Jesus cites the law, instead of—‘But I say,’ He says, “It is *written*.” Here another mode of delivery is designated. It is “written,” is our Lord’s frequent answer to friend and foe, to the Pharisees and Satan, to inquirers and disciples.

If Jesus was only restoring the old authority, the matter rested not on Christ’s then-spoken words. But Jesus afterwards owns these as His sayings. “These sayings of *Mine*.” vii. 24.

“I say to *you*.”

Jesus marks the new dispensation; a new body of subjects are addressed.

The Ten Commands were given to all Israel. But Jesus now addresses not even the two tribes. He speaks to “disciples”—a new, moral body, selected on a spiritual principle.

“Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment.”

Some critics reject, on perhaps sufficient manuscript authority, the Greek word which we render,—“without a cause.” It was perhaps inserted to soften the apparent harshness of our Lord’s words. But it is not really necessary, as will be apparent presently.

‘Is all anger then, it may be asked, between one Christian and another, wrong?’ By no means. A Christian master may be justly angry with a Christian servant, for disobedience; or a Christian father with a believing son. That word “Be ye angry, and sin not” (Eph. iv. 26), admits the possibility of anger being without sin. “And when He had looked round about on them *with anger*, being grieved for the hardness

of their hearts”—is said of our Lord Himself: Mark iii. 5.

But where one brother is angry with another, the one or the other must be wrong. Either the *anger* is just, and then the party provoking it must be wrong. Or the feeling is *unjust*, and then the indignant party is in fault. Either way, it is a matter to be decided by Christ. It is a breach of the love and peace which Jesus would maintain, as our constant spirit. And each government feels bound to take up and adjudicate every breach of the peace among its subjects.

“Angry with *his brother*.”

The Sermon on the Mount recognizes two classes of mankind. “Disciples,” on the one hand; and “men,” on the other.

A disciple is here supposed to be angry with his fellow-disciple. Under the law, an Hebrew only was the “brother” of an Hebrew.

“Shall be in danger of the judgment.”

Jesus’ disciples have “*fled for refuge*.” Heb. vi. 18. They are presumptively manslayers only, not haters of one another. But the controversy must be adjudged between them. It stands over therefore, till the fixed day.

“He shall be in danger of the judgment.”

Over whom are these penalties suspended? Not over wicked non-professors. Not over hypocrites: but over *disciples*. If so, and the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints be true, they cannot be *eternal*. This liability to judgment does not *necessarily* suppose infliction of penalty, even where one of the parties is clearly guilty. The next paragraph is designed to show us, that this liability may be removed, both as regards present effects of a fault, and future ones.

The punishment of the law affected this life, and the

Israelites' portion in the land. The punishments here threatened affect the age to come, after the appearing of the saints in the presence of our Lord. The plaintiff and defendant of the law, stood in mortal bodies before mortal judges. Not so in the cases supposed by our Lord.

Who, indeed, but God, can judge cases of anger, not manifesting itself outwardly?

Observe then, that the liability which, under the law, was attached to the *slaying* a man, Jesus attaches to that which was no offence at all under Moses. The penalty which Moses assigned to *homicide*, Jesus assigns to *anger*! Is that no addition to the law?

Some have asserted, that our Lord regards *anger* as equivalent to *murder*. By no means! The anger might be righteous, and no offence at all. The appearing of the homicide before the congregation in judgment might issue in his honourable acquittal. In murder, the law directed that no composition should be made. Here reconciliation is not only possible, but commanded.

"But, whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council."

The sense of the Syriac word 'Raca' is, as is generally agreed,—'Vain,' 'Empty.'* It answers exactly to our colloquial English expression, 'a good-for-nothing fellow.' The cognate Hebrew word is found in Judges xi. 3. "There were gathered *vain men* to Jephthah."

Our Lord has first treated of the feeling of anger as it arises in the breast, unmanifested even by a word. But now He proceeds to cases in which angry words display the feeling within.

Anger depreciates the value of him with whom we are offended. Jesus gives us a common specimen of

* Hence our word 'rake'

the *contempt* of anger. It describes the displeasing party as 'good-for-nothing.'

But this is not only anger, but also *false witness*. For, as applied to a Christian brother, it is wholly untrue. How can he be good-for-nothing, whom it has pleased God to make His son? How can He be good for naught, whose purchase cost the death of the Son of God? who shall be accounted worthy to live with God for ever, and to reign for evermore?

The heavier offence then entails a heavier penalty. He "shall be in danger of the council."

"The Council" is the supreme court of the Jews. (1) In "the judgment" is contained, I suppose, a reference to the inferior judges who were to be found in every city, according to Deut. xvi. 18. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout all thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment." But "the Council" refers, I suppose, to the Sanhedrim, or council of seventy-two elders, holding its meetings in the metropolis. This higher court is recognized by Moses. "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up *into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose*; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee:" Deut. xvii. 8—10.

As then this is a greater offence, 'tis tried by a higher

court. It supposes, too, a heavier penalty. No court at present on earth will decide such cases. It is a court of the kingdom of heaven, and the time of decision will be that of the Lord's return.

"But whosoever shall say to his brother, *Möreh*, shall be in danger, even unto the Gehenna of fire."

There are differences of criminality, and answerable differences of punishment.

The word which I retain in its original form,— '*Möreh*,'—our translators render, 'Thou fool.' If it be a Greek word, this is its right translation. But then, what difference of *principle* is there between this case and the former? Why so much heavier an infliction?

So weighty have these observations been felt to be, that Campbell and others propose to regard the word as Syriac. In so doing, they have the previous word, *Raca*, as their manifest warrant. So taken it signifies— '*Thou REBEL!*' And here is a difference of principle, sufficient to account for the increased penalty.

This word supposes a very high degree of criminality in the person concerning whom it is used. He is worthy of death. "If a man have a stubborn and *rebellious* son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto him," then they are to bring him before the judges, and to say, "This our son is stubborn and *rebellious*, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard." Thereupon he was to be stoned to death: Deut. xxi. 18—21.*

Again, God says of Israel, "They *rebelled* against Me, and would not hearken unto Me then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them." And the Most

* This is very awfully instructive. A *son* might be put to death.

High tells us that in His last dealing with Israel—"I will purge out from among you the *rebels*, and them that transgress against Me:" Ex. xx. 8, 13, 21, 38.

The application of this term to the people of God in anger was once esteemed a very grave, and even an unpardonable offence. "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, YE *REBELS*: must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Num. xx. 10. For this saying, God shut both Moses and Aaron out of the land, highly valued servants as they were.

The calling a child of God, '*REBEL*,' is a great sin. It is the result of the *ill-will* of anger; and displays a new feature of its evil. It sets one reconciled to God by the blood of the cross, among the *enemies* of the Most High. Had the offender power equal to his will, he would place the object of his displeasure in hell.

Now, this is not only *ill-will* of the deepest character between brethren, but it is also *false-witness* of the gravest kind. He who is brought near to God, a son and heir, is no rebel. Thus the offence is twofold.*

Let us now consider the penalty.

1. Observe its fearful *extent*. For a *word* only, under the Saviour's decree, a greater punishment is to overtake the offender, than for the *worst deed under the law!* He is to be cast into the place of God's enemies,—"*Gehenna of fire*,"—"the Second Death!"

'Do you mean, then, that a converted man will be lost for ever?'

No! What follows, as well as the Scripture doctrine

* Observe also, that both these names are not untrue, save as applied to brethren in Christ. The unconverted *are* '*good-for-nothing*,' and '*rebels*.'

of the Perseverance of the Saints, prevents such a conclusion.

2. Notice, secondly, the *grounds* of this severe threatening. It was the righteous decision of the law, that where a witness was proved to have raised a false accusation, after the two parties, the accuser and accused, had "stood before the Lord," the false accuser was himself to suffer the pains which would have been inflicted on the accused, had his testimony been true: Deut. xix. 16—21. This righteous principle then, in "the day of wrath, and *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*" (Rom. ii. 5), will take effect. As, if the accused were a rebel, he would be cast into the Gehenna of fire; so, as he is *not*, the false accuser is himself cast in.

'Can a Christian be guilty of this offence?' Certainly. There are but too many cases of it. How cautious should we be then in speaking against professed believers; specially under the influence of anger!

Is the Sermon on the Mount addressed to believers?

If it be, then, as they can commit the offences, the pains and penalties annexed can be theirs. It has been justly exploded, as a self-evidently false principle of prophetic interpretation, that 'All the *promises* of the prophets belong to the *Church!* All the *wrath* and *threatenings* belong to *Israel!*' And is it not as self-evidently a false principle of ethical interpretation—'All the *promises* belong to the *converted!* All the *threatenings* apply to the *unconverted* alone.'

'But if the offence be once committed by the believer, is there no hope? Must he endure the Gehenna of fire?'

Certainly not! Here comes in God's mercy on repentance, as discovered in—

1. Our reconciliation with the *offended brother*. He is to forgive us, on our repentance, or himself to lie under the judgment of God: Matt. xviii. 21—35; Luke xvii. 3, 4. This is taught us in the next paragraph but one.

2. Our reconciliation, secondly, with *God Himself*: 2 Cor. vii. 8—11; xii. 21; Rev. ii. 5, 21, 22; Rom. ii. 4; Matt. xviii. 27, 32; John xiii. 1, 10; 1 John i. 9; ii. 2.

Here then we have clear proofs, that Jesus is a new Legislator, constituting, on new authority—

1. A new people of God.
2. Undergoing education, on the new principle of mercy.
3. New offences are defined.
4. And severer penalties.
5. He repeals old laws. (1) Oaths, (2) Divorce, (3) Retaliation. (These are yet to be considered.)
6. Nobler rewards are offered.
7. New blessings, and contrasted woes, unknown to the law, appear: Luke vi. 20—26.

To see that it is new legislation, let us take an illustrative case.

Suppose the Viceroy of Ireland to say: 'In the time of William the Conqueror, to kill a head of game, was to suffer seven years' imprisonment. *But I say*, 'He that being unlicensed, throws stick or stone at any head of game shall receive seven years' imprisonment. If he break a leg of pheasant or hare, he shall be imprisoned for life. But if he *kill* any head of game, he shall be put to death as if guilty of high treason.'

I ask, would such legislation be a mere expounding, or restoring of the old game laws? True it is, that the same kind of offences is forbid by both laws. But the

penalty is far weightier. Law punishes only the acts it has defined. It frowns, 'tis true, on acts less heinous, of a *like* kind. But it does not inflict the penalty, save on the act defined.

Suppose now a person to be brought up before an English court, as guilty of throwing a stick at a pheasant. Would the English judge inflict seven years' imprisonment? Of course not! He would dismiss the case as constituting no offence at all against the game laws of England. And if the prosecutor were to allege the Viceroy's words, as establishing his view of the offence, the judge would reply—"The act may be an offence *in Ireland*—on that I give no opinion. That must depend on the right of the Lord-Lieutenant to enact *such a new law*: but it is of no manner of force here.'

UNJUST ANGER AS AFFECTING OUR WORSHIP.

23. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and then rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Jesus is drawing forth the consequences of the principles laid down: as the connecting word "therefore" shows. Since we are responsible for anger, and a brother's righteous indignation against us discovers sin on our part, therefore is this further precept of our Lord to be observed.

Jesus speaks of the 'altar,' and 'gift,' as owning the ceremonial law of Moses to be still in force at the time He was teaching. In these words then, we obtain a confirmation of the interpretation of ver. 19, previously given. Jesus, however, speaks only of a 'gift,' not of an atoning sacrifice.

Though the ceremonial law be no longer in force, the principles of the precept apply to us at this day.

Jesus supposes that after the temple is entered, and the priest's attention is called to the disciple's offering, he suddenly remembers—that some Christian brother "hath ought against him." The expression is very general. Does it mean, that he has a *just* ground of complaint against us? Or does it include also an offence *unjustly* taken?

It seems to me, to be supposed, that the ground is a just one. The burden of going to the offended party is laid on the defendant. As he caused the offence, he is to remove it, if possible.

It is a "brother" who holds this ground of complaint. We can never be sure of having the worldly at peace with us. They are "the unjust," hating us for our being sons of God.

Under these circumstances, the worshipper is to leave his gift, at the very altar. Here is a stronger call, an obstacle to be removed before acceptable worship can be rendered. The adoration is not, at the root, evil; it is only suspended, till this preliminary difficulty is disposed of. It is not said, '*Take away thy gift.*'

Behold herein the high standing which the new doctrine of our Lord takes above that of the law!

The law, in order to acceptable worship, required only, that the offering should be perfect of its kind, and that the worshipper should be a circumcised Hebrew, not defiled by any bodily uncleanness.

Jesus here takes into account the worshipper's spiritual standing before God, and his fellow-Christians.

"First be reconciled to thy brother."

Prayer is hindered, by feelings of separation and enmity among disciples. It is not only hindered, in

its freezing effect within our own bosoms: but this passage instructs us also, that it is obstructed before God.

How much more potent would prayer be, if Christians were not so divided, both in opinion on points of our holy faith; and if personal offences did not interpose!

The offending brother is to seek forgiveness, and a return of unity.

“Then come and offer thy gift.”

This ground of complaint was the only obstacle to acceptable worship. Therefore, it is clear, that the party addressed is a believer,—a disciple. It could not, without introducing a new gospel, be said to the ungodly,—‘Be at peace with all your neighbours, and you are at peace with God!’

Herein we seem to have a reference to the offerings of Cain and Abel. There must be first acceptance of the offerer, ere the offering can be received. “And the Lord had respect unto *Abel* and his *offering*: but unto *Cain* and his *offering*, He had not respect:” Gen. iv. 4, 5.

The precept here laid down by our Lord applies, of course, with increased force to the Lord’s Supper. The table of the Lord is the place, not only of worship, but of the manifested union of the Lord’s people. “For we being many are *one bread* (loaf), and *one body*: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (loaf): 1 Cor. x. 17. That is to be the feast of love. Each brother is to “lift up holy hands, *without wrath*.”

Believers! love is to be our constant spirit. If offended, we are not to retain our anger. The contrary temper grieves the Holy Ghost, and hinders communion with God. To many, this is the beginning of fearful

backsliding. Be at peace one with another! Grace would lead us to seek to be at peace, even with the unreasonable. “As far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

RESULTS, IN THE JUDGMENT-DAY, OF OFFENCE GIVEN.

25. “Agree with thy plaintiff quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest the plaintiff deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the servant,* and thou be cast into prison. 26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the very last farthing.”

The word “adversary” employed by our established version, gives a wrong impression. The Greek word means, not one who is a deadly foe, but one who has a lawsuit against another. In the present instance, it signifies the offended brother of the previous paragraph. The two parties are both subjects of the same king, even Christ. The courts of His empire are open to implead one another. Unadjusted differences, as being breaches of the peace of Christ’s kingdom, must come into question before our Lord Himself.

The design then of the present words of the Saviour, is to show us the future effects of quarrels between believers.

The Saviour directs the defendant to “agree quickly with the plaintiff.” He would have us to prevent such cases from coming into His court; since otherwise, if the claim be just, the damages will be exacted of the offender.

“Agree quickly.”

1. Life is short, to both the plaintiff and the

* Τηρησθησ.

defendant. One or the other may be, by death, suddenly hurried beyond the power of reconciliation.

2. The coming of Jesus Christ may be at any moment. Be speedy, then!

Let the reconciliation be effected, as you are "in the way with him." Life is the few yards of road that lie between your house and the court of judgment. To *that*, not the ungodly alone, but believers also, are marching. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God:" Rom. xiv. 10—12.

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad:" 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

Our disputes and complaints may be settled now on terms of *mercy*. Use, then, the opportunity while you may!

"Lest the plaintiff deliver thee to the judge."

The consequences of neglect are drawn out for us. If you are unjust, in refusing your brother his right demands upon you, at length will come the orderly, regulated steps of *justice*.

The plaintiff brings you before Christ, the Great Judge. Your trial begins; the evidence is satisfactory: your guilt is proved: the sentence is given. The Judge delivers you to the servant of the court: 'Here, jailor, take him away!' Execution begins: the angelic

servants of Christ carry into effect His will: you are "cast into prison."

It is of course supposed, that your brother has a just ground of complaint against you; else he would be non-suited. 'Tis 'no true bill.' He would be liable himself to penalty, as a false accuser. But the most probable case is taken. As the plaintiff is a believer, it is assumed (in order to bring out this great principle) that his accusation is just.

Jesus regards the offence as a *debt*, and describes the penalty as a *prison*. He speaks not of "Gehenna of fire," as in the previous case. It is only in a case of *debt*, not in one of *crime*, that the plaintiff leads the defendant into court.

"Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the very last farthing."

The Lord Jesus introduces the issue with that solemn formula, "Verily I say unto thee," which He uses where the issue must rest upon His word alone. But 'tis Truth that says it.

'Tis then "the day of *judgment*"—that is, of *justice*. Hence the debt is exacted by Christ, as *His* concern. His is the sentence, and it must be fulfilled: the offender must pass his time, not in the glories of the kingdom, but in prison-gloom. The judgment is delivered before the millennium; the imprisonment will not cease till its close. The defendant is excluded from the kingdom as "unjust." "Know ye not that *unrighteous* persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. vi. 9. (Greek.)

The kingdom, as it is the period of reward to the righteous, so is it, to those of a contrary conduct, the time of exclusion and penalty. There will, of course, be different degrees of intensity of the penalty, in

proportion to guilt. But, I suppose, that our Lord here asserts, that the duration of the sentence will be the same in all.

The offences between brother and brother are not infinite, and so neither shall the duration of the sentence be for ever. The last farthing will be paid off: the time of imprisonment expire. "The age to come" is to be the time of forgiveness of some things, as well as the present age: Matt. xii. 32.

'But this is *purgatory*!'

Is it SCRIPTURE?

Do not, Christian brother, seek to set aside a truth because it is unpleasant, by raising a storm of prejudice. If this be not spoken to disciples, prove it! Put it down by force of Scripture! Hew it in pieces with that two-edged sword! But if it be the word of Christ, bow to it!

'Tis not, in its chief features, like the Romish doctrine of purgatory.

(1) Purgatory is supposed by Romanists to begin at death, to end at Christ's appearing. The sentence here begins only with the Saviour's judgment-seat.

(2) The parties detained in purgatory, it is asserted, may be delivered by prayers, masses, indulgences, etc.

This last is the especial feature, which has rendered the Romish doctrine so justly odious. It has no place here.

But the one great question is, What saith Scripture? —To that I bend; do you also, beloved!

ADULTERY.

Matt. v. 27, 28.

27. "Ye heard that it was said,* 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I say unto you, That every one who gazeth upon a married woman † with a view to desire her, committed adultery with her already in his heart."

JESUS comments now upon the seventh and tenth commandments. He spoke of the blessing propounded to the "pure in heart." He now speaks of the woe to offenders against purity.

Whence came the prohibition against adultery? From the Scribes? Nay, but from God. The very words of the Decalogue are cited. The law was good, as far as it went. But Jesus advances far beyond the law.

'But I say unto you.' Not, 'But the law says unto

* *Tois ἀρχαίοις* is omitted here by some critical editions.

† Literally 'on a wife.' That is, the wife of another; else no adultery.

Israel. For the law to Israel has just been quoted, without addition or omission.

1. Jesus now extends the crime from the bodily act, to the adultery of the heart.

2. He enlarges the pains and penalties.

3. With regard to divorce, He withdraws the law's previous permission; and makes it a grievous moral offence, to be visited with awful penalty.

"Every one who gazeth on a married woman with a view to lust after her."

The offence which the Saviour here condemns has, I believe, two restrictions, which do not appear in our translation.

1. One of the two parties, the man or the woman, must be married; else there is no adultery. Accordingly the word translated 'woman' is the usual word for 'wife.' That a married woman is in question, appears from the two commandments on which the Lord Jesus is delivering his comment. "Thou shalt not covet *thy neighbour's wife.*" So also it is apparent in verses 31, 32, where the subject is continued; the law of divorce being handled by the Great Teacher.

2. The look is not a casual, undesigned glance. It is a voluntary turning of the eye, with the design to excite desire. 'Tis not a sudden evil thought, darting into the soul, and resisted by it. It supposes the heart's surrender to the temptation. Evil has gained the victory within. The man voluntarily gazes, with a view to rouse his unlawful passion.

Of such a case, our Lord may well say—"He committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Many things may hinder the outward act: but to His eye Who sees the movements of the soul, heart-adultery has already been wrought.

29. "Now if thy right eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Gehenna). 30. And if thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

What is the penalty for such an offence? That for angry words has been given: is there none for this? O yes! These words indirectly tell us. But they extend far beyond the particular case which has been started. The Saviour lays down a general principle which applies to multitudes of like instances.

"If thine eye cause thee to stumble." *

Not, 'If thine eye cause thee to *commit adultery.*' The previous gaze is an exemplification of what our Lord meant by the eye causing us to stumble. But He would not confine His application of the principle to that. It takes in the tenth command to its full extent.

But a difficulty arises here. Is the eye the *cause*? Is the *right* eye more engaged in the sin, than the *left*? No! the eye is the instrument of the sin. The soul is the primary cause. But Jesus speaks of the eye as the instrumental cause, and of the right eye as the more precious of the two.

"Pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

Is this to be literally taken? I suppose not: any more than we are to regard the eye as the efficient cause of the sin. The Saviour did not command the literal plucking out of the eye to the adulteress (John viii. 1), or to the Magdalen (Luke vii. 48). But it may be said, that these were cases where the sin was

* *Καρδαλιζει.* It does not mean, "makes thee angry."

committed before discipleship began. The Saviour then did not bid Peter cut off his hand, after he had offended by drawing his sword, and cutting off the right ear of Malchus : Matt. xxvi. 51.

I suppose the meaning of the words to be,—‘Let sin be so hateful and fearful a thing to you, that you voluntarily remove from yourself not only what is evil, but what is harmless, and even most dear and useful, if it lead you into sin. Cut off occasions of transgression—whatever would induce you to it, let it not belong to you. Disavow your partnership in sin, by the sacrifice of whatever would attach you to its service.’ It is related, I believe, of Cecil, that his love of music, after he entered into the ministry of the gospel, led him to devote too much time to his violin. Perceiving what a snare to him it was, he cut across its strings, and never touched it again. So, if a Christian, possessed of a fine voice and ear, found that these gifts led him into worldly company, and danger of intoxication, better it were never to sing again, than be drawn into the vortex of sin.

“For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish.”

A view of our own interests is thus offered to us, as a legitimate motive of action. Many imagine, that the glory of God is the one and only lawful motive. They are mistaken. The two do not clash, in this and many other instances.

The result of the plucking out of an eye would be the loss of a member. The beauty of the face would be gone.

But it is supposed, that by such conduct the man would display his determined zeal against sin. The displeasure of God will light on sin alone. But if all

that is sinful be cut away from us, how should that wrath descend on us? Room is offered herein for repentance. If the believer seek to cut off the occasions of sin, and to keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, it shall be well with him in the Great Day.

“And not that thy whole body be cast into hell.”

‘Either *cast away a part*, to keep the rest pure. Or you will *be cast wholly* into fire.’

The time supposed is after the resurrection. The “body” has been raised.

To whom is this spoken?

To a disciple. (1) In the case of an unconverted man, is but one member wrong? Would the removal of that be salvation? But ’tis supposed here, that, if saved from this sinful act, the party would enter the kingdom of God. “If thy hand or thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to *enter into life* halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire:” Matt. xviii. 8.

But it may be said—‘This text speaks of entering into *life*: and gives as the contrast, the being cast into *everlasting fire*.’ It must mean then, the entrance into “eternal life,” and not into the millennial kingdom. It must be spoken of the unconverted.’

No! ’Tis addressed to “disciples:” ver. 1. And “life,” without the addition “eternal,” sometimes stands for the millennial glory. “If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into *life* maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched:” Mark ix. 43. But what says ver. 47? “And if thine eye

cause thee to stumble, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into *the kingdom of God* with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." This also was spoken to disciples : ver. 33, 38.

In these verses then, as in the passage of Matthew before us, "hell" is made the penalty of the worst cases of transgression on the part of the disciple. "He that *overcometh* shall not be hurt by the second death : " Rev. ii. 11. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : *on such* the second death hath no power : " Rev. xx. 4.

What is the present penalty which is inflicted on open sins in a believer, by the command of God ?

The incestuous disciple at Corinth was to be put out of the Church, and delivered up to Satan : * 1 Cor. v. It is also directed, that the same thing should be done in the case of one reputed a brother, who should be guilty of fornication, or covetousness, or idolatry, or railing, or drunkenness, or extortion : ver. 11, 13. Now if for such offences believers are to be dismissed from the assembly of the saints now, how much more will they be excluded from the kingdom by our Lord ?

Look at the subject also from another point of view. What said the law concerning adultery ?

"The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife. . . . *the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death :*" Lev. xx. 10. The mode of penalty seems to have been stoning : Deut. xxii. 21, 22, 24.

* 'But,' it may be said, 'it is added, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This may consist with his entering the kingdom.' It may consist also with his exclusion : for it says not when the salvation should be, whether at the beginning, or the close, of the day.

Death was to be inflicted, according to Moses' law, in the following cases :—

(1) For murder : Ex. xxi. 12. (2) For the cursing or striking of a parent : ver. 15, 17. (3) Menstealing : ver. 16. (4) On the master of a goring ox : ver. 29. (5) On those guilty of bestiality : Ex. xxii. 19. (6) The breaker of the Sabbath : Ex. xxxi. 15. (7) The sacrificer of a child to Moloch : Lev. xx. 2. (8) The incestuous : ver. 10. (9) The Sodomite : ver. 13. (10) The sorcerer : ver. 27. (11) The blasphemer : Lev. xxiv. 16. (12) Those who pried into the sacred things of the tabernacle, or thrust themselves into the priest's office : Num. i. 51 ; iii. 10. (13) The false prophet : Deut. xiii. 5.

Now, against whom were these capital punishments decreed ? *Against members of the people of God*,—was it not ? Every kingdom has laws for its subjects. Every law must carry with it a penalty for the breaker of it. As then, Moses brought laws and penalties affecting members of the kingdom of Israel, so does our Lord give laws affecting His subjects.

His definition of offences is far more strict than of old. So also are the pains and penalties menaced.

The *law* and the *penalty* must apply to the same person, must they not ? You admit that the law against heart-adultery applies to the disciple. How then do you escape the conclusion, that Gehenna belongs to the so-offending disciple ?

The time of the infliction of this threat is, of course, at the Saviour's return ; ere the millennial kingdom begins. "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the *adulterers*." Mal. iii. 5. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor

covetous person, who is an idolater, *hath any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God.* (Greek.) Let none deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them :” Eph. v. 5—7. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles who know not God. That none go beyond or defraud his brother in the matter (Greek), *because that the Lord is the avenger of all such*, as we also forewarned you and testified :” 1 Thess. iv. 3—6. “*Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge :*” Heb. xiii. 4. To whom are these last three citations addressed ? To the saints of God !*

‘Must then the saint, if guilty of this heart-adultery, be cast into Gehenna as long as the thousand years shall last ?’

Not necessarily. Not if there be repentance. Not if there be confession, and abstaining from the sin.

Jesus complains of Jezebel of Thyatira, as seducing His servants to commit fornication. He adds—“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and *them that commit adultery with her* into great tribulation, *except they repent of their (her) deeds :*” Rev. ii. 20—22. This very clearly proves believers to be

* Here lies the only error I have seen in that exquisite little book, “The Church, her Calling, &c.” It affirms that no penalty is threatened in this Sermon to an offending disciple.

capable of adultery, and the remission of the penalty upon repentance.

Our Lord then utters a similar command concerning the right hand. Let believers fear to commit theft, or any other sin ! Recognise, disciple, your tendency to sin. Cut off occasions enticing you to it. At any present loss of power, loss of comfort, or suffering, sever between yourself and sin.

Very wise is such a course, in view of the future judgment before Jesus. ‘Of two evils, choose the least.’ To save life, the surgeon cuts off a gangrened member. One hour of Gehenna were more terrible than months of suffering here. One day of the kingdom would make amends for severe endurance now. So evil is sin, so dire its penalty, that you do well to tremble at the Word of God ! “Fear Him !”

DIVORCE.

31. “Now it was said, ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.’ 32. But if say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery : and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.”

This cutting off of an offending member was not to extend to the divorce of a wife.

By whom were divorce, and its writing, permitted ? By the erroneous legislation of the scribes ? No. But by God himself. “When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, *then let him write a bill of divorcement,*

and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife :” Deut. xxiv. 1, 2.

Here is a manifest change of legislation. The law permitted divorce for many reasons : the Saviour for one only : for that act which dissolves the marriage tie ; joining the offender to another man.

Our Lord Himself teaches that this is a change of legislation, arising out of the change of dispensation. “*The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is being preached, and every one is pressing into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than that one tittle of the law should fall. Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery, and every one that marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery :*” Luke xvi. 16—18.

The word that is spoken in Matthew to disciples is, in this case, made binding on all. And the Jew is warned, that another dispensation had set in, and that another legislator had risen up. If then he should still rely on Moses, and esteem himself free to divorce and to marry the divorced, as under the law and the prophets, he would find himself awfully mistaken ; for he would be regarded by God as an adulterer, and suffer his terrible punishment for the crime.

Jesus says nothing now of stoning, or of a writing of divorcement.

If the wife were dismissed for any but the one lawful cause, her transgression, after such dismissal, would be laid (in part) at the husband's door. He would be guilty of her acts of concubinage, as having thrust her out into temptation.

Moreover, should any marry her, after such bill of

divorce, given while her first husband was alive, he would be an adulterer. The bond of marriage cannot be dissolved by any such instrument.

So also the husband, if he marry again, after such divorce, while she is alive, is an adulterer.

‘But may the innocent party marry, after a separation upon the one lawful ground ?’

It would seem so, by natural inference. 1 Cor. vii. 15 would seem also in its favour.

Those who maintain that Jesus simply expounds the Mosaic law, are in great straits here.

In this case our Lord makes *that* a moral crime, attended with tremendous punishment, which was a lawful act before. Is not that an addition to the law ? If the law permitted divorce only on the ground allowed by Jesus, He could not have told the Jews, that the divorce of Moses' law was granted only because of the *hardness* of their hearts. Moses, speaking to the *hard of heart*, at God's word allowed divorce. Jesus, as speaking to the *renewed of heart*, forbids it. Behold then a manifest alteration in the *subjects* of the legislation, and in the *provisions* of it.

Suppose that in the reigns of the four Georges, it were allowed to every resident near the New Forest, to cut one fagot daily out of the royal woods. But in William the Fourth's reign an act passes, making the cutting of such fagot, or the receiving it, death. Would that have been no change of legislation ?

With how strict a legislator have we to do ! He reads the heart. The thoughts of all are open. The very thoughts are, if evil, a grievous crime, to be followed by sore punishment.

Sinner ! How can you stand before so holy a Lord God ? How can you make satisfaction for your past

thoughts, words, acts? How cleanse the flow of your feelings and desires? How escape?

There is but One Deliverer!

You are bound to Satan's service by many links. You are near to enduring God's wrath for sin. But, as yet there is space to repent. Use it! Else you will be cast into hell-fire. Better to suffer aught now, than to be imprisoned there for ever. Let not the fear of your comrade's laugh detain you in sin and its endless pains. If you are *laughed into hell*, you cannot *weep yourself out!*

OATHS.

Matt. v. 33—37.

33. "Again ye heard that it was spoken to those of old time, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform to the Lord thine oaths.' 34—36. But I say to you, 'Swear not at all: neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God: nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37. But let your word be, 'Yea, yea; Nay, nay: ' now whatever is more than these, springeth out of that which is evil."

In these words our Lord seems to have in His eye the third and the ninth commandments.

He is forbidding OATHS.

What is an oath?

1. It is often said, that 'calling God to witness' is an oath. This is *part* of an oath: but, taken by itself, it is not so.

2. It is rightly defined by Barnes thus: "An oath is a solemn affirmation or declaration made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed, and *imprecating His vengeance and renouncing His favor, if what is affirmed is false.*" Or as another has described it more briefly, it is—(1) SELF-BINDING, (2) UNDER SELF-IMPRECATION.

The oath in English courts of justice is as follows: "The evidence you shall give to the court and jury sworn, between our Sovereign Lady the Queen and the prisoner at the bar, shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; so HELP YOU GOD!" Whereupon the New Testament is kissed, as a sign that the oath is taken. That word,—'So help you God,' contains the imprecation. It is as if you said,—'If I speak any thing but the truth, may God at the day of judgment give me no help to escape His wrath!' That is,—'May I be damned!'

As one has well said—"In the oaths prescribed by the legislators throughout Christendom, the juror certainly 'binds his soul by a bond' the most solemn: pledging himself as to the conduct he will pursue even under *the forfeiture of the divine aid and mercy*. But no Christian will say, that he has more power or control over that highest stake, than he has over his own head."

"The imprecatory import of our oaths is indeed very obvious from the express terms of the form in which they are most stately administered: and I have to own with shame, how long I wilfully shut my eyes against this: and imposed on my own conscience the idea, that the words, 'So help me God!' might be understood as a prayer for the divine aid and assistance in fulfilling the engagement."

"The particular phrase,—'So help me God!'—has been borrowed from the old Romans, among whom we find the language, 'Ita me Dfi adjuvent' ("So may the Gods help me"), &c., in such a connexion as decides its import. Nor is the imprecatory import of the English phrase less unequivocally established, when we observe how it is occasionally employed for the purpose

of confirming by oath the *truth of an antecedent assertion*; as,—'So help me God, it is true.' But, in fact, judges and lawyers are every year reminding the jury or the witnesses, '*that they have pledged their hope of eternal life arising from Christianity, for the truth of their verdict, or their testimony.*'"

"I believe it is well known also, that, when the court is examining, whether a child be sufficiently acquainted with the nature of an oath, to be admitted as a witness, the only answer which is considered satisfactory to the question—'What do you think will be the consequence, if you should not tell the truth after being sworn?'—is an answer which conveys that the child considers he must in that case be sent to hell."

1. WHAT WAS THE POSITION OF THE LAW WITH REGARD TO OATHS?

Just what the Saviour has indicated. 1. *Perjury* was forbid. "Ye shall not *swear by My name falsely*: neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord:" Lev. xix. 12. The third commandment virtually said the same thing.

2. Where oaths were taken, or vows were made, they were to be kept. "If a man *vow a vow* unto the Lord, or *swear an oath* to bind his soul with a bond: *he shall not break his word*: he shall do according to all that *proceedeth out of his mouth*:" Num. xxx. 2. So also Deut. xxiii. 21—23. Here then Jesus is not stating any error of the Scribes, but the very tenor of the law given by Moses.

3. But it should be added, that oaths under the law were not merely voluntary things: they were in some cases *commanded*.

(1) "If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; if it die, or be

hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it : *Then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both*, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods : and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good :” Ex. xxii. 10, 11.

(2) “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and *shalt swear by His name* :” Deut. vi. 13. Here it is set forth as a part of the service of God. It is repeated : Deut. x. 20.

(3) It was required in the trial of jealousy : Num. v. 19—21.

Let us inquire next, what is—

III. JESUS' DOCTRINE WITH REGARD TO OATHS.

He forbids them altogether. He does so in the closest, clearest, most emphatic way.

‘Moses forbade *profane* swearing and false swearing. I forbid *swearing altogether*.’ Jesus *prohibits* what Moses *commanded*.

“But I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL.”

‘Moses permitted you to walk on the edge of the cliff, with a caution not to slip, or fall over. I bid you *never mount the cliff*; take the lowly and safe road.’

Where a prohibition is uttered, it is, in logical language, an universal negative. If no exception be made, it is an absolute forbidding of the thing. ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ Here theft is prohibited altogether. No exception is allowed. It is so with regard to oaths. ‘Swear not.’ To make it more striking, it is added,—‘Swear not *at all!*’ In no manner, nor on any occasion!

But the Saviour takes certain special cases in hand, and gives reasons concerning them.

1. “Neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God.”

This, as is generally understood, is designed to correct an error of the teachers of the Jews, who thought that only some forms of oath were binding. ‘He who swore by the *temple*, was not bound by the oath. But he who swore by the *gold of it*, was.’ Matt. xxiii. 16—22. So too they seem to have believed, that oaths by the creatures of God were not binding. Thus Maimonides expressly asserts, ‘If any man swear by heaven or by earth, yet this is not an oath.’ So Rabbi Judah in Shevaoth. Elsley on Matt. v. 34.

Jesus, therefore, assures us, that swearing by the creature has a reference to the Creator, and brings in God as Witness and Avenger. The heaven by which a man swears, is the throne on which God the Great Governor of man is seated.

There are, then, two forms of the oath. (1) One, where *God* is sworn by : (2) one, where the *creature* is.

(1) When any swears by *God*, he regards Him as the object of fear, and calls down on himself His wrath, if he speak falsely.

(2) When any swears by the *creature*, it is regarded as an object of value or of affection ; and he perils it, and welcomes its forfeiture, if he do not fulfil his word.

The Saviour specifies a second case.

(2) “Nor by the earth, for it is His footstool.”

The earth, also, belongs to God. Inferior as it is in importance to the heaven, it still has a reference to the throne of the Most High, and the Great Governor notices all false swearing by that. Nor is it ours to pledge.

3. “Neither by Jerusalem : for it is the city of the Great King.”

Jerusalem was the ‘city of David.’ It was the city

of Solomon, the greatest of kings. But here we have a very decided intimation of what "the kingdom of heaven" is. The chief city of the future kingdom is Jerusalem. It belongs to the greater King than David or Solomon, who has yet to appear. Jerusalem is not the chief city of the *Church*. But Jesus the King of all the earth, shall take it as His future metropolis: Zech. xiv. 9, 16. But this King is more than man. "And *the Lord* shall be King over all the earth." "Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the *King, the Lord of Hosts*." "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth *unto Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts*, even upon them there shall be no rain." So also Mal. i. 14; Psa. xlvii. 2; "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, *the city of the Great King*." Psa. xlviii. 1, 2. Thus Jerusalem, in carrying a reference to her Great King, refers also to Jehovah.

(4) "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head: because thou canst not make one hair white or black."

He who swears by the creature, puts it as the pledge or forfeit, if he speak falsely. Jesus shows, therefore, that heaven, earth, and Jerusalem are not ours to pledge.

'But is not our head our own? May we not set that as the forfeit?'

No! 'tis more *God's* than *ours*. 'Tis His creation. He gave the hair its colour. His the inward fluid which makes it brown, or red, or black. When He

wills, that humor no longer fills it, and it becomes white. Over this fluid you have no control. You cannot exercise, therefore, even over that which you regard as peculiarly your own, such power as God does.

These words, also, hold up to our view *the weakness of man*. How little able is he to fulfil his vows and promises! Is he willing to put himself in God's balance *to be tried by His own perfect performance of truth*? Dares he to welcome God's terrors and curse, if he fail in any single respect? Has he power then to deliver himself from the hand of God? He, who cannot control the colouring fluid of one hair of his own head? In what numberless cases has the condition been broken by human infirmity, and the wrath justly deserved!

See then the immediate conclusion! If you may not pledge your head, because it is of God's creation and control, much less may you set as the forfeit *your salvation*, which is of God's gracious redemption, at so costly a price! If you may not expose even your head to God's vengeance, how much less your soul's eternal welfare! An oath is in effect saying, 'May I be damned if I speak not the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!'

Mark too the closing words of our Lord!

"But let your word be, 'Yea, yea: Nay, nay:' but whatever is more than these cometh out of evil."

If there were any doubt concerning the former portion, this would clear it up. In these words, our Lord teaches, that we are not to go beyond simple affirmation or denial. *Everything beyond that is forbid*. Is an oath more than simple affirmation? *It is!* THEN IT IS FORBID!

All beyond the 'Yes' and 'No' springs of evil—

(1) Of the evil that is *outside us*. It rises from the

distrust of each other, which sin has brought in, and which experience woefully confirms. Man, the liar, must be bound, ere he speaks truth.

(2) It springs of the evil *within us*. It springs of false ideas of man's uprightness, and human power and truthfulness.

An oath arises out of man's little dread of God, his purblind apprehensions of God's awful holiness and purity, and of the terrors of His vengeance.

IV. LET US NOTICE THE DEFENCES SET UP FOR SWEARING.

1. It is affirmed, that 'Jesus only meant to forbid *profane oaths in common conversation*.' He did not design to put a stop to those solemnly taken in a court of justice.

Will you be good enough to explain then, where is the contrast between Himself and the Law, on which Jesus insists? For Moses commanded *judicial oaths*: and forbade *profane oaths* in the third commandment. Permit any oaths, and you re-occupy the encampment of Moses!

2. It is said, that 'the only oaths forbid are *these four* which are specified: or only oaths by the *creatures*. It is not forbidden to swear *solemnly by the name of God*.' This is manifestly not true. Jesus forbids oaths "AT ALL." His apostle James, sensible of this defence which would be made, closed up the door by those memorable words of the Holy Ghost—

"But, *above all things*, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, NOR BY ANY OTHER OATH: but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay: lest ye fall into condemnation" ('under judgment,' *υπο κρισιν*.): James v. 12.

Does not the objector see too, that the lighter oaths

by the creatures are forbidden, *on grounds which with still greater force apply to the heavier and solemn ones?* 'Do not swear by heaven or earth,' says Jesus, 'for these oaths bring in God as Witness and Avenger, as truly as the formal oath by Jehovah.' Here then it is assumed, as the very principle of the prohibition,— 'That the solemn oath by Jehovah is not to be used by a Christian, because it brings in God as Witness and Avenger.'

Take an illustration.

The founder of a new medical doctrine arises. He addresses his pupils as follows—

"The doctors of former days taught—'In cases of fever do not bleed your patient till he faints; but while you draw blood sufficiently to lower the pulse, leave enough to sustain life.'

"But I say, '*Do not bleed at all*, nor lower the system; neither by leeches, for they carry off blood; nor by purgative medicines, nor by effervescent, for they weaken the force of life. But simply bathe the patient in water, wrap him in wet sheets, and give him water to drink: for whatever is more than this, perils the man's life.'"

Now would any imagine, that because bleeding by the lancet was not by name forbidden here, therefore any professed pupil of the new system might draw blood by that instrument as heretofore?

No! all would see, that those words—(1) '*Do not bleed at all*'—settled the question for every disciple. (2) That the prohibition to use *leeches*, because they drew away blood, applied still more forcibly to the *lancet*; because it abstracts still more. (3) And lastly, that the declaration that all beyond the water-cure was evil, condemned all similar and previous practice.

'Tis just the same here.

Vain is it to say, that 'Jesus forbade only a faulty form of oath—that by the creatures : or a faulty manner of taking it—as lightly, or in common conversation.' His objections touch (1) the oath's very nature and essence : (2) they spring out of the nature of Christians, as powerless for good, and "poor of spirit," if in their right mind : and (3) out of the nature of God, as terrible in His justice, and quick to detect the least rising of sin.

Unbelievers see at a glance, that Jesus forbids all oaths : and taunt Christians justly, with their inconsistency. The early Christians saw this truth, and refused to swear. Not a few of the early Fathers have recorded their own belief, and that of their fellow-Christians, that oaths are unlawful to a Christian.

'But how could law and government be carried on, if every one refused to swear?' The Church and the world are ever distinct, and ought to be : there will always be worldly men who are careless enough of the laws of Christ, and willing to do what seems to them so trifling an affair. But, whatever the result, that is not *our* care. 'Duties are ours, events are God's.'

'But Christ Himself swore, when set before the Sanhedrim : ' Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

Our Lord answered, when adjured by the High Priest, 'Cursed be thou, if thou tell us not whether Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' It does not appear, that this was taking an oath. But, if it were, Jesus' example in this respect is no guide for us ; for His words forbid it.

'But God Himself swears.'

He *did* swear in *previous* dispensations. It cannot be shown, that He *has* sworn in *this*.

But, even if He had, God's actions are not our guide, but His words to us. It was by offering just such a case to Jesus, that the Devil tempted Him. He told Jesus what God would do, if He were to cast Himself down from the temple. Jesus replies by quoting the direction given to the Israelite,—[Whatever God may do] "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

'But Paul commends an oath for confirmation, as an end of all strife : ' Heb. vi. 16.

Yes : the Apostle tells us what is customary among *men*. But the saint is carnal, and condemned, who walks as men : 1 Cor. iii. 3.

To the breach of this command is annexed a threat—implied, by our Lord ; openly stated by His apostle James. The disuse of oaths is one of the laws of the Great Prophet who will admit into the kingdom, or exclude from it. What if this—no little command—is broken ? Clearly it is implied, that the Great King may exclude from His kingdom, even if there be no wilful perjury,—on the ground of disobedience. Not those who call Jesus Lord, but those who do the will of the Father, shall enter the kingdom : vii. 21.

But how many cases are there where, tried by God's searching eye and nicely-poised scales, the parties would not be found offenders against the conditions of the oath ? Consider the mistakes common to men in giving evidence, the failures of memory, the trepidation natural to those standing in an assembly of their fellows, and aware of the importance of their answers ; consider the ensnaring and perplexing questions asked, the danger of injuring themselves, their friends, or their estate, by their replies, and we may well ask—How many have over told, 'the whole truth, and nothing but the truth',

as God sees it? And if they have not done so, they lie under the curse self-imprecated.

To the believer then I would say,—‘Never take an oath! It puts you off the ground of grace, to set you upon that of justice. It takes you from Mount Zion’s top, to set you at the foot of Sinai. It brings you from under the shelter of the work of Jesus, where you stand secure from the wrath of God; and sets you, to be dealt with where you are, on your own deserts. You welcome God to save or condemn you, according to your deeds and deserts during the hour before you; or, in the case of the oath of allegiance,—according as you fulfil it in all your after life.

Abstinence from swearing is a duty of the dispensation. Oaths were right under the law. They did not alter a man’s standing before God then. He was always to be dealt with according to his deservings.

But you are not under law, but under grace. Keep ever on that blessed footing!

Some recommend the making a covenant with God, that we will obey Him. Do you, Christian, do no such thing! That is the law’s ground. Do you stand upon the grace of Christ! The flesh profits nothing.

‘But if we will not take an oath in a court of justice, we shall be fined or imprisoned for contempt of court.’ True, brother! Does not Christ tell of losses now, if we will follow Him? But will they not be made up in the kingdom of glory?

“The celebrated Burton mentions in his diary, that the learned physician Linacre [who lived before the Reformation], a little before his death, reading Matt. v. 34, “Swear not at all,” threw the book away, saying: “We are not Christians, or the gospel is wrong: we swear too much, or Christ forbids too much.”

NOT JUSTICE, BUT MERCY.

Matt. v. 38—42.

38. “Ye heard that it was spoken—‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’”

HAD the Saviour been reprobating the current erroneous views of the Jewish teachers of His day, He would have said: ‘Ye *hear*, that it *is* said.’ By the past tense employed, Jesus bids us notice, that the utterance whereby the words were spoken was not a continuous one, recurring in its original form again and again. God spoke the words once for all, and ceased. Man repeated His words, as the reader of the synagogue: and the disciples, as attendants at the synagogues, had listened to them. The past tense, as applied to them, indicated that their listening to Moses was past; because Jesus had now become their teacher. “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: HEAR HIM.”

“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”

This is cited, word for word, from the law. ‘Tis so fundamental a principle of Moses’ judicial law, that it is thrice given of God. The cases are deserving of study.

(1) “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child,

so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: *he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him*: and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, *eye for eye, tooth for tooth*, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe:" Ex. xxi. 22—26.

In these words God appoints a rule, both for (1) the injured person, and for (2) the executors of the law. Jehovah binds the injured husband to appear as the prosecutor, and to assign the damages: while the judges are to see the injury which had been inflicted, retaliated on the offender. Or, if we were to say only—'This is a rule to the *judges*:' still they would be bound to cite the husband, and to bind him to prosecute, and to assess the damages.

(2) The second instance occurs after the stoning of the blasphemer.

"And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good, beast for beast. *And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour: as he hath done, so shall it be done to him. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again*:" Lev. xxiv. 17—20.

Here the same principle is broadly and generally stated. Exaction of the penalty was required for every injury, from murder downwards. This is laid down as the law in Leviticus, or the 'Priests' Directory:' for they were to be the judges.

(3) It is affirmed yet once more, in the general body of commands given to the Israelites. It is taught in the book of Deuteronomy, whence our Lord draws His

quotations in His conflict with the devil; because this book defined the conduct due from every servant of Jehovah under the law.

"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the *priests* and judges, which shall be in those days: And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother: *Then shall ye do to him, as he had thought to do unto his brother*; so shalt thou put away the evil from among you. And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. *And thine eye shall not pity*; but life shall go for life, *eye for eye, tooth for tooth*, hand for hand, foot for foot:" Deut. xix. 18—21.

Here the same principle is extended to *intended* injury, and *mercy is forbid*.*

The priests and judges were to see to the execution of the law. The injured man was to prosecute. Private, excessive, vindictive retaliation, was forbidden (Lev. xix. 18), but all short of that was acceptable to God.

The law permitted (1) self-defence against an injury: and taught (2) the prosecution of the offender.

39. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not the evil man."

In these words, Jesus repeals the law of justice—the fundamental principle of Moses' enactments. The dis-

* As also in the penalty on the seducer to idolatry: Deut. xiii. 6—11.

ciple is not to resist, while the injury is taking place, nor to seek the redress of justice for it, after the injury has taken place.

This is in pursuance of the blessing which he had uttered on the "meek" bearer of an injury; and on the "merciful" pardoner of it.

The "evil" or violent man stands opposed to the "meek." He who unjustly seeks and takes another's property, is opposed to him who surrenders his own.

We are to 'resist evil,' in the sense of *sin*.

We are even, unto blood, to resist sin : Heb. xii. 4. We are to resist the *Evil One*, or the devil : James iv. 7 ; 1 Pet. v. 9. We are to resist evil *principles*, though asserted even by our brethren : Gal. ii. 11. But the resistance of evil which our Lord here forbids, is the infliction of physical suffering, or present worldly loss, by an evil or ungodly man. The worldly, who stand outside the disciples of Christ, are unjust, selfish, malicious. These words of our Lord then discover the conduct befitting the Christian, in such a case of injury.

(1) He is not to appear as the *plaintiff* against the offender.

(2) He is not to punish him, as the *judge*. The latter point is taken up afterwards : Chap. vii. 1. The Saviour's repeal of Moses' principle of righteous retribution, and His asserting the principle of mercy, must prevent the Christian from having recourse to law. Paul forbids to the Christian all recompensing of evil for evil ; while, at the same time, he acknowledges magistrates as God's officers, set up in a different sphere from the Church, to keep the *world* in some degree of order : Rom. xii. 17 ; xiii. 7.

Jesus, then, in His present teaching, on His own authority, sets aside the principle of the righteous

exaction of penalty. He puts away the spirit, motive, and actions implied and sanctioned under the law. That sanctioned both resistance and prosecution. Both are here *forbid*.

But as there was great danger lest the Saviour's words should be misunderstood, He gives some cases as specimens, embodying the principle He would commend to us.

39. "But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other."

1. The Saviour takes the case of lawless force employed by an ungodly man in a personal affront. It is a kind of offence supposed by the law. After a blow struck, the injured man was to bring the offender before the judges, and they were to award a like blow. The judicial and lawful vengeance inflicted was to deter others from a like offence.

But the disciple is not to resist, not to seek the law's interference, and righting of the injury. Justice still has its appropriate sphere in the *world*. God maintains it there, or the earth would scarcely be habitable by His saints. But, in the *Church*, the new principle of mercy, which God is displaying towards the lost, and especially toward His sons, is to reign.

This precept of the Saviour's seems even to believers too unguarded and absolute. "Where the damage is *not great*," says Wesley in his notes, "choose rather to suffer it." "The law of nature," says Barnes, "and all laws human and divine, have justified self-defence, when life is in danger. It cannot surely be the intention to teach, that a father should sit by coolly and see his family butchered by savages, and not be allowed to defend them."

But against our view is cited our Lord's own conduct, when placed under the circumstances indicated. "And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, 'Answerest thou the High Priest so?' Jesus answered him, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?'" John xviii. 22, 23. Hereupon, it is alleged, Jesus did not turn the other cheek. It certainly is not said that Jesus did so. But it is evident, that the Saviour's words, on that occasion, are no contravention of His precept. He who might have avenged Himself, resisted not, nor retaliated. But we learn from this instance the further truth, that we may make appeal to the conscience of the offender. We may admonish by quiet words, though not defend ourselves by blows.

'But neither,' it may be said, 'did Paul act out this precept.' "And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him (Paul) to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, 'God is about to smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?'" Acts xxiii. 2, 3. This, we may admit, was not the perfection of meekness. But there was neither resistance nor retaliation here.

40. "And if any wishes to sue thee at law, and take away thy (inner) coat, let him have thy (outer) coat also."

2. Here is a case of injustice suffered *under pretence of law*. Jesus supposes one of the ungodly to sue a believer and his suit is designed to strip him, not only of property in house and land, but 'even of the coat off his back.' What is he to do in such circumstances? He would be willing to give up house, or land, or furniture;

but clothing is an absolute necessity, for his covering and to keep him from cold. May he not resist the unrighteous demand? His coat is his own: bought and paid for with his own money. May he not defend his cause, and stand upon his rights? Not if he will be guided by the Lord Jesus! 'Rather than resist even here, not only give up the garment in dispute, but your more valuable outer coat as well!'

This principle is enlarged by the Apostle Paul. Even if a Christian brother sue us unjustly, and would bring us before the courts of the world, we should give up the cause: 1 Cor. vi. 7. "Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

There is one case, and one only, so far as I can see, where a Christian is right, not in bringing an action, but in appearing and defending himself: I mean, where his character is in question. He may not bring an action for defamation, but if sued on any such ground, he would do well to appear, and defend himself, if unjustly accused: Acts xvi. 35—39.

But questions of property are settled here: the extreme case is taken, and decided by our Lord.

41. "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

3. This third example refers to *oppression*, or *unjust requirements of government*. The word for 'compel' is a

* The Grecian and Hebrew dress differed from ours. The garment demanded by the lawsuit is the *χιτων* or tunic; a garment reaching from the neck to the feet, over which was thrown the *μακτιον*, a garment somewhat resembling the Highland plaid.

very peculiar one, of Persian origin.* The governments of the East and of Rome permitted their officers, when employed in government service, to impress persons and beasts of burthen, without pay. A despatch is to be forwarded to Rome. The courier knows not the way. He is tired and knocks at the door. He wants your horse; for his is wearied. You have not one. 'You shall at least show me the way: and woe to you if you deceive me!' Now has the government any right, thus without your leave to seize on your property, and make use of it without pay? Has it any right to infringe on your liberty, and use your time without recompence? Will not you do well to resist, and endeavour to teach them a lesson on the rights of the subject?

If you will be guided by Jesus—No! Yield not only what is required, but rather than resist, give twice as much as is demanded. An instance is given in the gospel of the unscrupulous conduct of Roman officers. "As they came out (of the prætorium) they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear (take up) His cross:" Matt. xxvii. 32. Even *that*, a Christian, though not a malefactor, should be ready to do.

Now, though this particular case of exaction be not found in the free and excellent government of this land (All praise to God for His great mercy in giving it to us!) yet the principle has still to be observed by the believer. Take the following examples.

A chief in Western Polynesiâ "devised a plan that should interfere as much as possible with the schools.

* King Demetrius writes to Jonathan the Maccabee—"I also give order that the beasts of the Jews be not pressed for our service:" Joseph. Ant. viii. 2, 3. The word used here *αγγαρευειν*.

He ordered a new house to be built for himself in Rarotonga style, and demanded that the teachers should be the *architects*. They were to follow his servants to the felling of trees, they were to saw the trees into planks, and they were to be at the work every day from day-break until sunset, until the house was finished."—*Gems from the Coral Islands*, vol. i. p. 20.

They submitted to this, and were doubtless right.

The following anecdote has appeared in print. I give it from recollection. "In the thirty years' war, a German trooper knocked at the door of a Moravian's house. 'Come, friend, lead me to a field where I and my men may forage.' He led them near a field of barley fresh and green. 'This is just what we want'—said the trooper. 'Have patience,' replied the Moravian, 'and I will lead you to another field.' The troopers followed their conductor to a barley-field at some little distance, when the Moravian threw open the gate—'Now you can forage at your will.' 'Friend,' replied the trooper, 'you have given both yourself and us much unnecessary trouble. The other piece of barley was better than this.' 'Ah! but,' replied the Moravian, 'it was not *mine*!'

In our own country, too, there is occasion for displaying the same spirit. Some Christians from time to time raise the cry against poors'-rates, and especially against church-rates, as being 'oppressive and unjust.' 'Why should they have to pay for a form of religion which they disapprove? 'Tis unreasonable and unjust!' They refuse, therefore, to pay it. Is this the spirit of Christ? Are such speeches and actions those to which our Lord would lead them? Certainly not! The Christian is ill-instructed, who expects to find perfection in the best of governments. The world is the company of "the unjust." How should we expect

to find perfect justice there? We are to yield, even where injustice is legible on the front of a government-demand. Jesus is teaching the giving up of personal and proprietary rights. This is not our rest: injustice is not overwhelming, to those passing, as pilgrims and strangers, through the earth. The endurance of these things in Christ's spirit is working out for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The kingdom of the thousand years is the time of designed consolation for the sufferers for Christ now.

In the property-tax there is another opportunity of displaying the grace here commanded. The world's contrivances for cheating the revenue are many and sad. 'Tis notorious, that a vastly greater amount of capital is found in the country, than is represented to government by the proprietors. They will escape the impost as much as they can. Not thus should it be with the Christian. He should render to government a just account of his income, as he would to God. The officers of the Queen are "God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues:" Rom. xiii. 7.

How light is our burden of taxes, and how gently enforced, compared with the exactions of the Roman government!

42. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that wishes to borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

What wonderful, startling words are these! No wonder that the multitudes were astonished at such sayings of grace taught to disciples! Here is evidence, at the very first burst of the words, that they are not of men. Who but the Great Giver, the only Good One, would have uttered that saying of the Lord

Jesus?—"It is more blessed to *give*, than to receive.' He who will read the Scriptures needs no evidence from without to prove that they came from heaven.

Men of every age and clime are agreed in the opposite to our Lord's sentiment—"Tis more blessed to *receive* than to *give!*' Even to the renewed, 'tis an hard saying!

How seemingly unguarded, and how absolute are these words! We might have said—"Give to the *honest* and *deserving*. Give to the *necessitous*, the *sick*, and the *distressed*, even though their characters will not bear looking into.' But, '*Give to him that asketh thee,*' when the world is full of hypocrites and liars, of villains and sharpers, of the drunken and profane, that misuse all money they can lay hands on! This is to throw the disciple into the hands of the bad, bound hand and foot.

The Saviour's words here are too strong for His disciples and ministers. "It is better to give sometimes to an undeserving person, than to turn away one really necessitous. . . . It is seldom, perhaps never, good to give to a man that is able to work. . . . This [precept] deserves however some *limitation*. It must be done in consistency with other duties. To lend to every worthless man, would be to throw away our property, encourage laziness and crime, and ruin our families. . . . Perhaps the Saviour meant to teach, that where there was a *deserving* friend or brother in want, we should lend to him without usury, and without *standing much* about the security."—*Barnes*.

In this case again we rise high above the law's commands. Lending and giving were indeed required under the law; but only to a Hebrew: Deut. xv. 7—11. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which

the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

Here the barrier stated in the LAW is thrown down. The command is put in terms the most general. So difficult a precept can only be fulfilled by special grace, and under the motives supplied by the Saviour. This conduct is however quite reasonable, in view of the rewards to the obedient, and the promises of the millennial kingdom. *He* commands, who will recompence the losses incurred, in the kingdom to come. It may bring in trial now: but no real injury will be suffered. We may extend to money the Saviour's saying concerning life—'He that saveth his [money] shall lose it, and he that loseth his [money] for My sake shall find it,' at the resurrection of the just.

How contrary to this is the teaching of the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus! "*Give to the godly man, and help not a sinner!* Do well unto him that is lowly, but *give not to the ungodly: hold back thy*

bread, and give it not unto him, lest he overmaster thee thereby: for [else] thou shalt receive twice as much evil for all the good thou shalt have done unto him. For the Most High hateth sinners, and will repay vengeance unto the ungodly, and keepeth them against the mighty day of their punishment. *Give unto the good, and help not the sinner!*" xii. 4--7.

These words are spoken by Christ, in direct reference to our conduct towards "the evil man." But there are *believers* that take advantage of the precept against their brethren, who, as they are persuaded, are conscientious followers of the Lord Jesus. They borrow with promises to pay, which they never intend to fulfil; or at all events never trouble themselves to perform. This is very evil, even in the worldly. How much more in the Christian! It is putting themselves in the very place of the evil man! It is "doing wrong to and defrauding (even) brethren." And the apostle, in strong rebuke of such iniquity and ignorance, bursts out in the memorable words—"Know ye not that *unrighteous persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God?* Be not deceived: neither fornicators, . . . nor covetous, . . . nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God:" 1 Cor. vi. 8—10. "*The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:* but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him *shall inherit the earth:* and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off:" Psa. xxxvii. 21, 22.

It has doubtless occurred to some, that no government could be maintained on principles such as these. What is the design of all rule, but to repress evil? to keep down the dishonest, the thief, the robber, the swindler? What are courts for, but to try the criminal, to punish offenders who are caught, and by fear of the

like pains to deter others? What is the intent of policemen, but to prevent crime, or to detect it, and bring it to judgment? But if there are to be no oaths, courts must be shut up. What are kings set up of God for, but as "revengers to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil?" Rom. xiii. 4.

True! This shows therefore the distinction between the *Church* and the *world*: it proves that rulers and disciples occupy two very different spheres. Kings are ministers of God *to the world*, for vengeance on evil. Disciples are servants of Jesus gathered *out of the world* to bear witness against evil, by words of holiness and a life of patience and love. The one is to put down the violent and rapacious man, by power. The other to endure his evil, if the Lord is pleased to let him loose upon us; and to reclaim some of the worldly to God.

If then the ruler wishes to be a true disciple of Jesus, he must give up his worldly authority, and lay aside his sword.

'But on such grounds as these, the Christian is left exposed to all kinds of injustice.' True! he has only his Father's all-watchful care to preserve him! But he knows that all things are working together for good to him. "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward:" Heb. x. 34, 35. Looked at from the millennial glory, in view of our calling to a heavenly country, to heavenly honour and riches, these words of Jesus are, despite seeming folly, truest wisdom.

It is sometimes objected—'Our Lord is here addressing *private Christians*, not *magistrates*. He is not

forbidding *them* to try prisoners, and inflict punishments.'

If He be not addressing magistrates, *it is only because magistrates will not belong to the number of His DISCIPLES*. This is the rule to all who will follow Christ. Oaths, judges, courts, penalties, belonged to Moses' law: for it was justice putting down evil, and securing to each member of the people of God the earthly blessings which were his portion. But these things are not found in our Lord's instructions to disciples of the gospel; because His principle is mercy, and the hopes of His people are not earthly, but of heaven.

LOVE TO ENEMIES.

Matt. v. 43—48.

43. "Ye heard that it was spoken, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.'"

At this point the opponent of the view here advocated generally feels confident of victory. 'Where do you find any permission in the law to hate enemies?'

I will point out presently.

It is clear that the first portion of this citation is a part of the law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord:" Lev. xix. 18.

But it is added,—'The rest was merely a Rabbinic addition, alien from the spirit of the law.'

I think not. It seems to me not only permitted, but *commanded*, to Israel, to hate some of their enemies. "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord: even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever. Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. . . . *Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all the days for ever:*" Deut. xxiii. 3, 4, 6. "*Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come*

forth out of Egypt. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, *that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it:*" Deut. xxv. 17—19. "Thou shalt not abhor an *Edomite*, for he is thy brother; thou shalt not abhor an *Egyptian*, because thou wast a stranger in his land:" Deut. xxiii. 7.

The man of the law was to love his "neighbour." *But an Israelite only was his neighbour.* "Every creditor that lendeth ought to his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his *neighbour*, or of his *brother*: because it is called the Lord's release. Of a *foreigner* thou mayest exact it again; but that which is thine with thy *brother*, thine hand shall release:" Deut. xv. 2, 3.

Other nations were "strangers," and against these they might have causes of complaint, and be at war. And when at war, they might remember injuries, and hate the injurers, and avenge themselves. It was a part of the blessings of the law, that God would destroy their foes before their face. "I will be an *enemy to thine enemies*, and an adversary unto thine adversaries:" Ex. xxiii. 22. "Ye shall chase your enemies, and *they shall fall before you by the sword.* And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: *and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword:*" Lev. xxvi. 7, 8. "The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against

these one way, and flee before these seven ways :” Deut. xxviii. 7. When they went forth to war and to slay their foes, God’s priests were to encourage them, and His sacred trumpets were to fill them with courage. If they took a city after a siege, “When the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, *thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword . . . and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee :*” Deut. xx. 1—13, 14. In the cities of the seven nations of Canaan, they were to leave “alive nothing that breatheth :” ver. 16—18. “And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves on their enemies :” Josh. x. 13. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, *Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites :*” Num. xxxi. 1, 2.

And again, still more fully, God commands, with regard to the seven nations of Canaan, “*Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them : thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them :*” Deut. vii. 2.

But it is objected, that the law commands an Israelite to help his enemy. “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burthen,* and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him :” Ex. xxii. 4, 5. The command springs primarily out of pity to the ox or ass ; it reaches the enemy indirectly only. But it is admitted, that it is an indication of the nobler principle of the gospel.

* The last clauses of the verse are evidently corrupt. They should be, as the LXX. indicate—“Thou shalt not withhold thine help, but shalt surely help with him.”

44. “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

The two last paragraphs are a carrying out into practical exemplification the blessings uttered by the Lord upon (1) the mourners, (2) the meek, (3) the merciful, and (4) the persecuted.

How far was love, under the law, to extend itself ? “Thou shalt love *thy neighbour as thyself :*” Lev. xix. 18. “And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. *But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself :*” ver. 33, 34.

Your God “loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. *Love ye therefore the stranger :* for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt :” Deut. x. 18, 19.

This is the utmost extent of love required by the law. It was to embrace the Israelite, and the foreigners whom they found in their land.

But now God takes no longer the title of ‘God of Israel ;’ nor is the foreigner alone to be the object of love : but enemies also ! Here is a filling up indeed of the demands of the law !

The previous paragraph had taught passiveness under injury from the worldly. But this word strikes far more deeply. ‘How am I to *feel*, when treated unjustly ? I may not *strike*, but may I hate mine enemy ?’

I say unto you, “*Love your enemies.*” Not, that is, those whom you hate, but those who hate you. ‘But how is it possible ? These enemies of mine hate me, because they hate God and His Christ also. Their lives are evil ; they are persecutors of God’s saints. How can I love those, whose ways are so sinful ?’

There are two kinds of love. (1) The love of *approval*, or of complacency: and (2) the love of *pity*. We cannot feel towards these sons of Belial the love of approval; as when we see God's image in His saints. But we can love them with a love of pity and of goodwill. As we think of their sad state, at enmity against God, and their awful doom, if overtaken in their impenitence, we may seek to pluck them from destruction. They are not beyond hope. We may pray for them. We may ask God to turn their hearts. We may pray, as Stephen, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!' or as our Lord, 'Father, forgive them!' We may remember that we were once as they, and that, but for infinite grace, we should have abode in our spiritual death. It may be then, that God will have compassion upon them, and out of enemies who seek our hurt, transform them into brethren beloved, fellow-travellers to the glory, fellow-heirs of bliss.

Four modes of exhibited love are noted by our Lord in this passage, and in the parallel one of Luke. (1) Love of the *heart*, pity and goodwill. (2) Love of the *lip*, good words for evil ones. (3) Love of the *hand*, bestowing of benefits. (4) Love of *prayer*, or our good wishes poured out in supplication to God. And these forms of good are to meet and overcome correspondent forms of evil in the wicked.

This doctrine of the Saviour then raises the question, '*Is war lawful to the Christian?*' Every national Church must decide it, as the Church of England has decided in her Thirty-seventh Article: "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars." A very mild expression for killing his enemies.

But does Jesus allow this to His disciples? Is it

consistent with the *love of enemies*? Conscience may decide! What are the laws of war? Destroy an enemy's subsistence; burn or sink the ricks and flour; drive away the cattle, plunder, pillage, waste. Is he besieged? Cut off his supplies of water! Starve him out! Compel him by famine and thirst to surrender. So did English armies in Portugal and in the Crimea. Such is the first dictate of war! But what says the New Testament? Aye, to believers of the *Romans*, those stern masters of war? "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, '*Vengeance is Mine*; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Therefore, *if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink!*" Rom. xii. 19, 20.

When once arguing this point with a believing clergyman with reference to the war in India, he maintained, that the soldier in battle might keep this precept of Christ—first praying for the sepoy, and then shooting him dead with his musket! But I suppose few would desire such Christian love as that.

'But if defensive war be not lawful, this is to give the Christian up into the hand of his enemies!'

Distinguish, brother, between the disciples of Christ and the world. These lessons are given to those not of the world, but renewed by grace. Believers are a little flock, and if they all refused to war, God could defend them still. The world will fight, be sure!

45. "That ye may become sons of your Father Who is in heaven: for He causeth His sun to rise upon evil men and good men: and sends rain upon just men and unjust."

Here is the first reason for this precept. The Israelites nationally were first-born of Jehovah as the God of the earth, having their portion here below.

But Jesus came to reveal God as the Father in heaven, and the heavenly inheritance. The Israelites were not sons, but slaves, before God; as being under the law and the curse: Gal. iv. 1—7.

Believers are sons of God, by faith in the Father and the Son: John i. 12, 13. They are however to seek to become sons of God, in the *dispositions* appropriate to sonship. As children, they are to imitate their Father: Eph. v. 1. His character is to mould theirs. By nature, as born of Adam, they are selfish, perverse, proud, revengeful. By grace and becoming oversight of themselves, they are to become gracious, forgiving, lovely. "*Put on* therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things, *put on* charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness:" Col. iii. 12—14.

Two great exhibitions of God's character in nature are then appealed to: His gift of light to the wicked, as well as to the good; and His bestowment of rain on the crops of His enemies, as well as on the farms of His friends. He Who poured thick darkness over Egypt while the children of Israel had light in all their dwellings, could easily still effect the severance, if He would. But He is gracious: and His grace and patience to His enemies are to be a lesson to us, to act in a similar spirit towards those who hate us.

This position of God in grace towards the enemies of His people now is but for a time, and is different from that of former dispensations. "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee," was God's word concerning the enemies of Abraham: Gen. xii. 3.

"*He shall eat up the nations His enemies*, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with His arrows. . . . Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and *curst is he that curseth thee*," was God's word of old by Balaam concerning Israel: Num. xxiv. 8, 9. It is confirmed by God Himself in the covenant at Sinai, according to the text quoted above: Ex. xxiii. 22.

But the question may suggest itself to some minds, 'Why did the Saviour speak of God's *natural* gifts to men, when He might have appealed to that chief act of His love, the giving His Son to die for sinners? That is a far greater act, and one peculiar to the dispensation. Why not appeal to that?' Because, I suppose (as one reason at least), it was too early for Him to do so. Israel's enmity had not, at that early date, exhibited itself, and Jesus speaks of His death, only in proportion as the unbelief and hatred of Israel displayed themselves.

But though not then insisted on by our Lord, it is a motive to us, now that the great act has taken place, and its gracious design has been made known.

This appeal of our Lord to the character of His Father as Creator and Possessor of the heaven and its orbs, is very important as a barrier raised by the wisdom of God against the theory of the heretics of old, who, from the differences between Moses and Christ, asserted the Creator and God of the Jews to be an evil being, not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour therefore calls His Father, and the Father of His believing people, the Possessor of the heaven and its orbs. The sun is "*His sun*," and He "*causes it to rise*." The *rain* is His, and He causes it to fall.

46. "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

Here is the second reason for the love of enemies. The love of *friends* is easy and natural. It finds a place in the heart of some of even the worst of men. The exactors of the Roman taxes, all covetous and extortioners as they were, despised by the Jew as the very scum of mankind, could yet entertain this feeling. As this feeling is so easy and natural, it has no claim for reward. Reward is for difficulty overcome. It is, in general, in proportion to the difficulty to be surmounted. The pay of the labourer who can plough is not great: 'tis so easy, as to be learned by almost any. To keep accounts is more difficult: and the pay of the accountant accordingly is greater than that of the ploughman. To command an army in the field is more hazardous and difficult still: and the reward and the honour are accordingly far greater.

In the governments of the world, whose standard is justice, rewards are given to the police, for the detection and conviction of offenders. But it is God's purpose to give reward to His sons, who, in this dispensation of mercy, have endured the insults and injuries of the wicked at His command, and have returned, not evil for evil, but good for evil.

This is glorifying to God. It displays the power of His commands, and the force of His grace in enabling men to overcome nature.

"Not revenge myself on those boys, sir?" said a Sunday scholar to his teacher, who was endeavouring to persuade him to forgive some boys who had injured him. "It's impossible! 'Of course I must be even with them. I don't meddle with anybody who does not meddle with me: but it isn't in the nature of flesh and blood to be kind to those who ill-treat us.'"

Very true! Jesus is asking something possible only to the renewed, and assisted by God's Holy Spirit. He is demanding something beyond what was the law's reasonable rate of old.

He confesses the difficulty. Because of its difficulty, it is to be specially rewarded.

This shows us also, that the highest sense of the Saviour's words is to be taken; because that sense only creates difficulty.

"What reward *have* ye?" The present for the future. What reward will you have in the kingdom of the thousand years? Thus Luke puts it: "Your reward *shall be* great:" Luke vi. 35. It is a putting the question to you, for your own candid answer. Can you suppose you will have any, for conduct which is exhibited even by bad specimens of fallen human nature? Will the publican be rewarded for loving his friends? Neither will you.

To reward (1) *evil* for *good* is the mark of deepest depravity. (2) To render *evil* for *evil* is the suggestion of nature, and the ordinary current of the world. (3) To render *good* for *evil* is the result of divine grace in the renewed heart, and the very demand bespeaks the grace of the Son of God.

It is of course implied on the contrary, that those who do thus act will be rewarded. And the time of reward is the millennial kingdom, the conditions of entering into which our Lord is now giving. Those who fall below the ordinary level, both of mankind and of righteousness, will be punished. "Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house:" Prov. xvii. 13.

47. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the heathen so?"

The salutation of the Eastern nations is, 'Peace be with you!' This salutation, containing a desire for the welfare of the party saluted, the Jew will only give to the Jew; the Mahommedan will only give it to the Mahommedan.

If the Christian therefore were to act as they, and as human nature prompts, he would salute his brethren only. He would wish "Peace!" only to those of his own creed. But his love is to be expansive. He is to be the wisher and the bearer of peace to others.

'More than others,' then, is the Saviour's watchword. It was designed to elevate His disciples, not only above the publicans and the heathen, but above the Scribes and Pharisees. Merely to attain to their standard, would be sufficient reason for exclusion from the kingdom. In these lofty commands, then, read the height to which the Saviour has filled the vessel above the law's level. To keep His command is not to march over a level plain: but to climb, on hands and knees, the steep mountain-path.

In the dark ages there arose a ruler in Palestine, who was called "The Old Man of the Mountain." He enjoyed the most entire power over his followers. In order to prove it to a stranger who was walking with him on the terrace of his lofty stronghold, he commanded one of his followers to stab himself. The man did so, and dropped dead at his feet. He bade another throw himself over the terrace-wall down the precipice. He was obeyed, and the man was shattered to pieces at the foot. These proofs of his power carried conviction to the heart of his auditor. He shuddered. If thus his servants would slay *themselves*, how surely, at a word from their chief, would they have despatched *him*!

Obedience then to our Lord's words, so difficult as they confessedly are, is His glory. His commands are not arbitrary, much less evil, but pure grace; glorifying to God, resulting in good to the obedient. And even if they lead to death, He, as "Resurrection and Life," will recall the faithful servant to life and reward.

There appear to be two grounds for rewarding the sufferers for Christ.

1. The Beatitudes have pronounced those to be blessed, who are simply *passive*; being persecuted for the Redeemer's sake.

2. But, in this place, reward is by our Lord declared to be theirs, who display *actively* the grace of Christ's own Spirit, toward the persecutor.

48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The perfection here demanded is the perfection of receiving and obeying the new principle of grace, thus enjoined by our Lord. This is confirmed by the parallel place in Luke. "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore *merciful*, as your Father also is *merciful*." Luke vi. 35, 36. He then is perfect, in our Lord's view, who receives and acts out the lofty principle here introduced; as distinct from those who stand by the lower demands of the law. Perfection is spoken sometimes of one class of Christians, as compared with another. But here the perfection spoken of is that of the true disciple of Jesus, in contrast with those outside.

Moses was the witness of the *justice* of God, and the

people whom he taught, were to take that as their principle of life, and to act it out both toward God and man.

But do "*ye*"—the word is emphatic—receive and exhibit this new and loftier principle of love! Love is God's highest perfection: and His people now are to embrace and display this perfection. This is the aspect of God's character, on which they are to be moulded. The *fear* of God was that especial temper, which Jehovah sought to impress on Israel's mind. "God is come to prove you, and that *His fear* may be before your faces, that ye sin not:" Ex. xx. 20. But now Jesus would elicit from believers' hearts the feeling of *love* to God, as their Great Father in heaven. And love to Him is to call forth love, not only to their brethren in Christ, but even toward the evil and the persecutor.

This passage does not prove that any believer is already perfect. It is sometimes said, 'Perfection must be possible, or God would not demand it.' It might as well be said, 'Mr. Smith's debts are £5000, therefore Mr. S. must be able to pay the money:' though he is in prison as a swindler, and all his property is gone! It should be observed also, that those who speak of being sinless and perfect now, measure themselves by the old standard of the Decalogue, not by the far more difficult one of the Sermon on the Mount.

CHAPTER VI.

1. "Take heed not to do your righteousness before men, with a view to be seen by them; otherwise ye have no reward with your Father Who is in heaven."

CRITICS are in general persuaded that we should read "righteousness," instead of "alms," in this verse. The weight of evidence is greatly in its favour.

Thus read, these words are a general principle, applying to the three cases of ALMS, PRAYER, and FASTING.

The righteousness here spoken of is not the *imputed* righteousness which is *received* by faith. It is a righteousness which is to be *done* by the person possessed of imputed righteousness. It answers therefore nearly to "good works." Thus Jesus says: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works:" Matt. v. 16. And again: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all *righteousness*:" Matt. iii. 15. "He dispersed abroad, He gave to the poor, His *righteousness* remaineth for ever:" 2 Cor. ix. 7—9. Our Lord appears to be now referring to His previous sentiment—"Except your *righteousness* shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

He had given indeed hints of the need of a better righteousness than that of human obedience, in the blessing on "the poor of spirit;" and in the previous call of all Israel to repentance, followed by the baptism into a greater than Moses. But the discovery of the imputation of Messiah's righteousness to the believer, was a truth left for the Holy Ghost to testify, after Jesus' ascent.

The good works which the Saviour proceeds to specify, are not to be done "*before men.*" But had He not commanded us to let "our light shine *before men?*" Is not this inconsistent? No! There are two opposite tendencies in human nature, to one of which one class of men of one period of time is prone, and another class of men of another period, to the opposite. The Spirit of God gives directions against *both* these deviations. Some men are swayed by *fear*, and would keep secret their faith. Against these Jesus requires the profession of faith, and the manifest doing of good works. But another class is prone to vainglory, and to *pride*. Against this danger our Lord is now arming us. He forbids not the doing a good work in the presence of others; but it is not to be performed from the *motive* of desiring their applause. 'Do not your righteousness before men, *with a view to be seen by them.*'* Our good deeds are to flow from us, as light from a lamp. The lamp shines not only when men are present, but when the room is empty. The witnessing eye of men is not the regulating principle of its shining or not.

The reason of this caution is added: "Otherwise ye have no reward with your Father Who is in heaven."

* Here is the same phrase which our Lord used in His warning against heart-adultery, taken in the same sense—*ἵνα ἴδωσιν*—designating the motive of the agent.

"You *have* no reward with your Father." That is, none is being treasured up by Him for you. And as this reward is to be given at the kingdom, the Saviour uses the future tense in Luke vi. 35: "Your reward *shall be* great." It is a phrase of similar meaning to that—"Your reward *is great in heaven.*" Save, of course, that here the negative is used, it is nearly equivalent to that other expression of our Lord, "Ye shall not *enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

In this passage, as in many others, our Lord appeals to a sense of our own interests. The glory of God is the highest motive possible. But the desire to act prudently for ourselves, is a motive authorized and enforced by our Lord.

We are directed to seek reward in the kingdom. "Seek *first* the kingdom of God:" Matt. vi. 33; Gal. vi. 6—10. "This I say, He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully:" 2 Cor. ix. 6. The fear of losing reward is used by God as a motive to deter us from evil, not in this place only, but in others also: Eph. v. 5—8; 2 John 8; Gal. iii. 4.

'But is not the being moved by the hope of reward a *mercenary* affair? Is not the love of God to prompt us?'

We have not to *mend* our Lord's words, but to receive and *obey* them. The Saviour was urged to His wondrous work of self-devotion by a prospect of the prize before Him: Heb. xii. 2. It is not the *only* motive in the matter. There is no antagonism between the hope of reward, and the love of God as our Father. The Saviour, wherever in this sermon He is speaking of reward, *connects it with the Fatherhood of God*; so little did He regard it as mean, or mercenary. Could

not a human father say to his children?—‘My dears, I am very desirous that you should know the Scripture well. I wish you therefore each one to learn me as many verses or chapters as you can, and say them to me every morning. And observe, at the end of a year I intend to give rewards in proportion to the number of chapters learned by each of you.’

Would there be anything mercenary or mean in the children’s anxiety at once to please their parent, to know the Scripture, and to win the reward? Would there be any opposition or collision between the motives? Would not each conspire harmoniously to produce the desired effect?

The principle which our Lord lays down in this passage is one of great moment. He more than once offers it to our notice, and in varied forms. Reward is an alternative, or choice between two things. (1) You may either have it *now*, and from *men*; (2) or you may have it *hereafter*, and from *God*. *But you cannot have both*. Sense and passion say, ‘Let me have my reward *now*!’ Faith says, ‘Let me wait to receive it *from God in His kingdom*!’

But Jesus here affirms, that if we seek our reward from men now, we have here below all the reward we shall obtain. Take heed then, that you act not, so as to lose the future recompence!

Herein then lies the answer to Mr. Binney’s scheme of making the best of both worlds. *The thing cannot be done!* Have your reward here in wealth, mirth, affluence, and reputation, and you cannot have it in the age of reward to come.

Again, Jesus says, “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, *lest they also bid thee*

again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, *and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just:*” Luke xiv. 12—14.

The *false* prophets received their good things now, and would have none in the kingdom. The *true* prophets had to endure much persecution here below: but theirs is the kingdom. Comp. Matt. v. 10—12 with Luke vi. 26.

The returns brought in by earth are quick and small: future ones are like those of Solomon’s fleet, only after a long voyage. But their cargo is ivory, precious wood of fragrant scent, birds of starry plumage, and gold of surpassing richness.

2. “When therefore thou doest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may be glorified of men: verily I say unto you, They have at once their reward.”

Jesus now proceeds to speak of ALMS as one division of good works. The word “therefore” notes its resulting as a consequence from the previous general principle of the former verse. He had supposed that His disciple would be a giver out of the good things he possessed. In ver. 42 of the previous chapter, He had said: “Give to him that asketh thee.” He now points out the spirit in which alone the gifts could be acceptable to God. He would have us give from the love of God our Father, and with an eye to reward. This hope, as it depends on the promise of God, is a characteristic of the man of faith: as we read of Moses, that “he had respect unto the recompence of reward:” Heb. xi. 26. It is no earthly boon that we seek, but of

heavenly character. How can the desire of it be aught but good ?

That Christians, as good trees, should bear good fruit, is often insisted on in the New Testament. So is the Father glorified : John xv. 8. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou *affirm constantly*, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men : " Tit. iii. 1, 8, 14 ; Eph. ii. 10 ; Tit. ii. 14 ; 1 Pet. ii. 12 ; 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

The fear of being led into Romish error has too much kept Christ's ministers from proclaiming the duty of good works ; and from enforcing them with the motives which God has attached to the duty. Put good works as the way to justification, and the means of earning eternal life, and 'tis deadly doctrine. But speak of them as God's demands from those already justified, and possessors of eternal life ; and there is no danger. Nay, it is necessary that they should be enforced.

Jesus holds up hypocrites, as examples to be avoided in the performance of this duty. By "the hypocrites" our Lord no doubt intends the Scribes and Pharisees. The very spirit of their religion was hypocrisy, as He tells us : Luke xii. 1. "All their works they do to be seen of men : " Matt. xxiii. 5. They were almsgivers indeed, and this is a part of righteousness. But if His disciples advanced not beyond their standard, and gave with their motive, they would have no reward hereafter.

The Saviour then exhibits the open vainglory of these almsgivers. They "sounded a trumpet" before them.

Is this to be taken literally ? or in a figurative sense ?

1. There is no difficulty in understanding it in the literal sense. The poor might have been called together to receive gifts by sound of trumpet. It is not needful that this custom should be testified to us from some other quarter, ere we believe it.

2. But it may be taken figuratively. Suppose notice to be given by one of the synagogue officials at the service of the Sabbath—'The alms of Jonathan, the son of Zedekiah, will be dispensed at ten o'clock to-morrow, in this place, when a talent of silver will be given away to the poor,'—and you have as public and ostentatious a notice, as if given by sound of trump.

They chose out also the most public places, as the spots for distribution of their bounty. Nothing less open to the eyes of men than the place of religious assembly, or the street open to every passer-by, would suit them.

This is Jesus' first notice of the failures of the Pharisees. He reproveth them here for errors in *practice*, not in *theory*. Their faults as *teachers* are not exhibited by Him in the sermon, but only as *doers*. In Matt. xxiii. He sets forth their faulty *teaching*. But here, we, as *doers* of God's will, are set to exceed their *deeds*.

Their motive was thus manifested—"that they may have glory of men."

Then comes the sentence of the Saviour thereon.

"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward at once." *

Jesus adds His "Verily I say unto you," where any

* This is the force of the word *απεχουσι*. The preposition denotes its being received *off-hand*. So in a parallel place, Luke vi. 24. Alford considers it to mean, 'to have in full,' 'exhaust.'

momentous truth, dependent on His testimony, is to be laid down. *He* knows best, who will be the Distributor of reward in the kingdom. He therefore forewarns us; that we may believe, and glorify Him by obedience to His words of grace, and find His words fulfilled hereafter.

Jesus admits, that an effect did follow on this public dispensing of alms. They did gain what they sought. They won the character of 'most liberal, most religious men.' The beholders, the receivers of the alms spread throughout Jerusalem the tidings of their liberality. It was an article of news, of town talk: their name became celebrated. 'Have you heard that yesterday by the water-gate, Jonathan, the son of Zedekiah, gave away £200 to the poor?' 'How very liberal! He is a credit to our city.'

They did reap earthly results, as they sowed for them. But this was hypocrisy. It was not religious: it was done with no reference to God, or desire for His reward. But the only true spirit of religion and almsgiving must be founded on that.

The difference between the law and the word of the kingdom is here apparent. The law promised *present reward* as the fruit of obedience. "If thou shalt indeed obey His voice . . . There shall nothing cast their young, or be barren in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil:" Ex. xxiii. 22, 26. "If ye walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit:" Lev. xxvi. 3, 4, &c. But now Jesus says in effect, 'Be not you of the number of those who have their reward *now on earth*, and *from men!*'

3. "But when THOU doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing. 4. That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

"When thou doest alms." The time is left open, at your disposal. Only remember, the season is short: the night cometh, wherein these good works can no longer be done. And riches, even while we live, make themselves wings, and flee away. In this view, I have ever admired the following gracious act.

"The late Mr. Thornton was applied to by a respectable clergyman, for some pecuniary assistance. Mr. T., having listened to his story, immediately gave him a draft for fifteen pounds.

"While the grateful clergyman was still with him, the post-letters arrived, and Mr. Thornton begged him not to go till he should see if he had received any news which might interest him. He began accordingly to read one of his letters, and after a considerable pause, said to his friend, 'Here is a letter conveying bad news indeed: I have lost a very valuable ship, and certainly my loss cannot be less than £20,000. You must return me that draft, my dear sir: and to prove that I do not deceive you, read the letter which I have just received.'

"What could the poor clergyman do? He recalled to mind the condition of his starving and sickly wife and children, and anticipated the grievous disappointment which his returning from Mr. T. without assistance would occasion. However, with a heavy heart, he handed the draft back to Mr. T., and betook himself to read the letter, by way of concealing his distressed countenance. He soon perceived the loss was greater than Mr. T. had mentioned, and all his hopes died away.

In the meantime Mr. Thornton had been writing, and when the letter was returned to him, he said, 'You see, my dear sir, how unpleasantly I am situated; however, here is another paper which I desire you will put in your pocket.' The poor, hopeless clergyman took it, and opening it, found it a draft for £50!. He looked at Mr. T. as if doubting the evidence of his senses: but Mr. T. replied—'My dear sir, as the Almighty seems determined to deprive me of that wealth which He gave, and which He has so good a right to take away, I must be speedy therefore *to give it while it is in my possession.*'"

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing."

'Tis not a proverb, but one of the Saviour's strong and beautiful expressions. In taking money out of a purse, both hands are ordinarily employed. But the Saviour would have His disciples' ways such a contrast to the doings of the hypocrites, that, as if the right hand would suffice for the taking out the money and bestowing it, he would have the left not to be employed, as if it had eyes, and would be aware of the deed of alms. The hypocrite would have *all others* know his good works. The disciple should conceal it, if possible, even from the knowledge of *the parts of himself* engaged in the act.

Hence, methinks, the proceedings of our Religious Societies in printing the names, address, and gifts of their contributors, are infringing the spirit of this admonition.

And whereas the hypocrite chooses the public place as the scene of his almsdeeds, the disciple should select the private spot, "that his alms may be in secret." It is enough for the child, that the Father's eye is on him.

And then follows the blest consequence of such obedience. God will approve. It will be evident to yourself and to Him, that you are no hypocrite; that you intrust the fact to His eye to note, and to His hand to reward. Good deeds done from right motive, are to be recompensed in the kingdom. There the cup of cold water only, given to any because he is a disciple of the Lord Jesus, shall not go unrewarded.

God Himself shall reward deeds done for His eye. He will reward them openly. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done by the body, according to what he did, whether it be good or evil" (Greek): 2 Cor. v. 10.

The Pharisees then would be excluded from the millennial kingdom, as having had their good things here, and their reward now. But disciples acting as Jesus thus bids, would be admitted into it.

Thus the Saviour points out what is to be avoided as destructive of reward, what to be done in order to obtain it. Christians, go and do as your Master commands! Give to this subject the place in your hearts and lives which it held in the teaching of our Lord and His apostles.

Said the trumpet of the hypocrite—'Come, all Jerusalem! come and see!' Man needs a clarion-call to lead him from his own affairs. Not so God! Do you do your alms in silence! God needs no bugle-note to make Him attentive. He sees the quiet hand drop modestly the silver coin into the palm of the needy. The butler may forget Joseph, and Ahasuerus, Mordecai; but God needs no refreshing of His memory. The cup of cold water shall not be forgotten or unrewarded. He will reward openly. Ah! what a day of fame will that be

to some! What a change of conditions! Potentates hurled from their thrones: the dwellers in attics and cellars raised to sway sceptres: nobles ejected from their mansions: tenants of the hovel stepping in kingly port into the palaces eternal!

Christian! is this new to you? Have you no room in your system for this? If you are wise, you will *make* room! Look, builder, at the plan of the great Architect! You must take down that gable of your house, and build it afresh! See! you have left out a whole wing of the building! Look at the plan! Pull down whatever stands in the way! Give *grace* its first and foremost place. But both Jesus and His apostles speak oft of our *deeds* and *reward*. Do not think yourself wiser than they.*

Believer, are you suffering persecution for His name?

* Far from us be that abuse of this doctrine, of which the so-called Fathers of the Church were guilty. Of this the following is a specimen. Alms take the Saviour's place.

"Now the fire (of the lamps) is virginity, and the oil is almsgiving. And in like manner as the flame, unless supplied with a stream of oil, disappears, so virginity, unless it have almsgiving, is extinguished But now who are the vendors of this oil? The poor who for receiving alms sit about the doors of the Church. And for how much is it to be bought? For what you will. I set no price upon it, lest in doing so I should exclude the indigent. For so much as you have, make this purchase. *Hast thou a penny? Purchase heaven!* Not indeed as if heaven were cheap, but the Master is indulgent. *Hast thou not even a penny? Give a cup of cold water, for He hath said, &c. . . . Heaven is on sale, and in the market, and yet we mind it not! Give a crust and take back paradise; give the least, and receive the greatest; give the perishable; receive the imperishable; give the corruptible; receive the incorruptible. If there were a fair, and plenty of provisions to be had, at the vilest rate, all to be bought for a song, would ye not realize*

The hope of reward is given to cheer you, to stay the flowing tear, to lift the heavy heart. "Rejoice! leap for joy, your reward is great in heaven!" Great as your sorrow on earth, aye far greater! For it worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

It is difficult to act out these words of the Redeemer. True, but reward is in proportion to difficulty. Is your toil for Christ unpaid now? Do you often receive but trial and sorrow, where you are seeking to do good to your brethren? Persevere; a true view of your own interests, as well as love to Christ, would keep you engaged at service which is not paid for now. Entrust your work to the memory and generosity of the liberal Son of David.

Sow on! the more you give, the larger the amount of seed you sow, the greater the reaping. There are no frosts there to blight, no rains to rot, no enemy to cut and carry off the harvest, ere it reaches your barns. Go on! "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to each according as his work shall be!"

your means, and postpone other business, and secure to yourselves a share in such dealing? Where, then, things corruptible are in view, do ye show such diligence, and where the incorruptible, such sluggishness, and such proneness to fall behind? Give to the needy, so that, even if thou sayest nothing for thyself, a thousand tongues may speak in thy behalf; thy charities standing up and pleading for thee. Alms are the redemption of the soul. And in like manner as there are set vases of water at the Church-gates, for washing of hands, so are beggars sitting there, that thou mayest (by their means) wash the hands of thy soul. *Hast thou washed thy palpable hands in water? wash the hands of thy soul in almsgiving!*"—*Ancient Christianity, &c.*, p. 218.

Rev. xxii. 12. Our God becomes "the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him:" Heb. xi. 6.

Be patient for your reward! A wealthy but niggardly gentleman was waited on by the advocates of a charitable institution, for which they solicited his aid, reminding him of the Divine declaration (Prov. xix. 17): "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay again." To this he profanely replied: "The security, no doubt, is good, and the interest liberal; but I cannot give such *long credit!*" Poor man! the day of reckoning was nearer than he thought. Not a fortnight passed, ere his soul was required of him.

But some, I fear, do not give as Christ here assumes His saints would do! What think you? 'You have an acre of good land there ready ploughed. What crop have you put into it? None! 'What! none!' 'No! the seed costs too much.' 'Of course then you do not expect any harvest?' 'O yes, I do: as good a crop as my neighbours?' Is not that farmer a fool? *Mind you don't imitate him then!*

"Dotard, rouse thee from thy sleep!
Sow thou must, if thou wouldst reap!"

Now a word to the UNGODLY! Jesus speaks of those who have God for their heavenly Father. Is He *yours?* No. You fear Him, hate Him, keep out of His way, hide your joys as much as you can from His eye. The Christian is the lark rising in early morn to bathe in the light and freshness of heaven, soaring to sun himself in the splendours of the Lord of Day, and from his joy-lit heart flows out the song of praise. What are you? The mole plunging downward from the eye of day, groping amid darkness, grubbing earth-

worms, son of the clod, and child of the night. Rise, become child of the morning, son of God. Awake, "arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

The word of God speaks of the hypocrite. Is there a hypocrite among my readers? I dare say there is. Many are hypocrites, that have not the smallest idea they are so. The congregation is singing a hymn. Yes! the hypocrite is singing. What says the hymn?

"Lord, Lord, Thy fair creation groans,
The air, the earth, the sea,
In unison with all our hearts,
And calls aloud for Thee."

Of course she feels it then! No! not in the least! What shall we say of that service? Is it worship approved of God? 'Tis hypocrisy!

Here is one who is using the mask for a constancy. He is an ungodly man, but seeks to win for his wife a believer. She will not accept, as he sees, one whom she knows to be an unconverted person. He therefore wears religion's cloak to deceive. Having gained his object—when there is now no need of the deceit, he will rend his profession to the four winds. What is that? Hypocrisy.

Here is another. He is poor. Some Christians he knows to be charitable, and ready to aid especially the poor saints. He will put on then the mantle of saintship, to gain some aid of money or means. He comes to the place of worship with regularity, takes his seat so that he may be seen by those he would deceive; he uses the hymn-book, he sings, he kneels. How attentively he listens! Surely there must be grace there! Not at all! 'Tis gold-leaf thinly spread

over—lead! Man's eye may not discover it: God's eye detects the cheat at once.

Poor man! *Who* is deceived? *You* the *deceiver*! This is worship to the devil's mind. Carry it on to the close, and you will gain his approval, and lose your own soul. Would you desire to have him say!—'You are a first-rate actor! You have played your part to admiration. You looked the very character! How you took in those silly gulls—the saints! But the play is over now. Put on your own dress now—and—I'll pay you your wages!'

Would you have them? hypocrite!—the wages of sin, ever paying, never paid? the lake of fire, the Second Death? If not, rend off the mask, and flee to His feet, Who is able and willing to forgive!

PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 5—15.

5. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward at once."

"*When* thou prayest."

Jesus does not now for the first time command alms, prayer, or fasting. These services existed under the law, and are natural parts of religion. Jesus, then, assuming them to be parts of righteousness, directs us how they may become acceptable to God; or how we may escape those faults in their performance, which render them displeasing to the Most High.

How thankful should we be, that the times of prayer are left free! How difficult it would have been for all to have been disengaged at the same time! The factory-girl, the surgeon, the shopman, the invalid, the sailor! Yet it was quite in accordance with the spirit of the *law*, that they should have been defined. The law regulated, to a considerable degree of precision, all that belonged to its worship. There were two occasions in which worship was commanded by Moses: at the presenting of first-fruits and of tithes. A form of

words was dictated in each case: Deut. xxvi. How is it, that Jesus is free from the tendencies of the religion He was brought up in, and from those of His nation?

Moreover, Mahomet, in his counterfeit revelation, fell into this scheme of bondage; though the wisdom of Jesus had preceded, to show him the true way. Mahometans, by order of the Koran, pray *five* times a day, at set times. (1) An hour and a half before sunrise. (2) At noon. (3) Two or three hours before sunset. (4) At sunset. (5) At midnight.—*Koran*, ch. ii. p. 6; ch. xx. p. 264; ch. xvii. p. 234.

Now how could such a command be kept in the far north, where the sun rises for six months, and sets for six months?

Not content with this, Mahomet defines the very voice of prayer! "Pronounce not thy prayer aloud, nor pronounce it with too low a voice, but follow a middle way between these: and say, 'Praise be unto God, Who hath not begotten any child: Who hath no partner in the kingdom, nor any to protect Him from contempt: and magnify Him by proclaiming His greatness:'" ch. xviii. p. 237. What is the consequence of this? Prayer is with Mahometans a heartless, formal thing.

Still, while Christ has left open the times of prayer, as best may suit the circumstances and employment of each, we shall not do well to leave the times of our prayers to chance: or to pray only when we feel an inclination to pray. Religion cannot long sway the heart without prayer: and prayer should have its regular times, as well as our meals.

"Be not as the hypocrites."

Man loves reality. An Englishman detests deceit in those with whom he has to do, and despises the flattery

which is prompted by the hope of gain. God desires reality also. He Who sees through the words into the heart, values the service by the heart, not by the words. Words are appearances: the heart is the reality.

We can collect the real meaning of the heart, only at secondhand. But let a mayor know, that the praises lavished on him at his installation are only a regular form, gone through in set words, each time a citizen is chosen; and he would feel great contempt for such 'cut-and-dried' compliments.

The first requirement in every religious service, specially in an address to God, is the heart.

Where there is a false motive at the bottom of any religious service, it is nearly sure to display itself by contrast with the true conduct of the right-minded. The man of hypocritical prayer sought the most public places. The streets were not public enough; he must choose a corner where he could be visible to persons moving in two directions. He must go up to a house set apart for worship, that all might understand why he went.*

He Who knows the heart declares the motive, as well as describes the conduct which indicated the motive. He reveals the motive, to teach us, that God's eye is on the springs moving within the bosom. To Him, not all is gold that glitters. He saw rottenness at the core of this golden-rinded pine-apple. The eye, in these hypocritical prayers, was turned, not on Himself, but on men. Nature teaches us to look to the person whom we are addressing, and from whom

* There does not seem to be anything amiss in the posture they are said to have used. 'Standing' was a common position for the exercise: 1 Sam. i. 26; 1 Kings viii. 22; Mark xi. 25.

we expect the gift we are requesting. A king might well reject with indignation the petition of a subject, whose eyes, while he was speaking, were turned away from his majesty, and wandering about upon the jewels and dresses of the courtiers round.

Christians! while we are engaged with God in prayer, let us see that our eyes are fixed full on Him; and that men are forgot, save in so far as we are pleading for them.

“Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward at once.”

The same significant notice re-appears. The Saviour does not say—‘They receive no recompence whatever.’ They do. They secured what they aimed at,—the favourable regards of their fellow-men. But all they are to have, they get at once. *Where* they sow, there they reap. *What* they sow, that they reap. Their seed is earthly, earthly is their crop. They sow no heavenly seed; no heavenly sheaves are theirs.

6. “But THOU, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber; and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret, shall reward thee.”

The true believer’s conduct should be unlike the hypocrite’s; quite a contrast to it. *They* seek the most public places out of doors. Do you not only keep within doors, but choose the most private place, within the house. And even when in your chamber, leave not the door open; but be, as far as possible, cut off from the eye and ear of men.

Observe again; as the chamber is the place pointed out by Christ for prayer, so it needs not any holy, any *consecrated* place for a Christian’s devotions. The vain idea is abroad in our day, as if ‘churches,’ buildings

‘consecrated’ by men, were the best places for prayer. No! the Spirit of God foresaw this mistake, and dropped a word in correction. “I will therefore that the men (Greek) pray *everywhere*, lifting up holy hands:” 1 Tim. ii. 8. Let the hands and heart be holy, and they will consecrate every place. *Public* prayer is right in its place. But true piety cannot long subsist without *private* devotion.

Some may object, that they do not know where to find a private spot. Jesus points it out. Our bed-chamber is the best place ordinarily. ’Tis generally in most houses unoccupied during the day, and hours during the night. But if not within the house, we can find a private spot outside. ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way.’ Jesus lived in the East, where, as a traveller testified, privacy is a thing almost unknown. The Saviour went *apart* to pray.

I was much struck with the contrast between the Saviour’s directions about prayer and the spirit of Mahometanism, as exemplified in the conduct of its followers.

“While standing here [at Suez] I noticed a Mahomedan going through his prayers: for Mahomedans, like the Pharisees, pray in public, not in private. Amidst all the noise and confusion [of the arrival of a steamer] the man commenced his devotions, just as if no one were near. Lifting up his open hands on each side of his head, he cries out, *Allah-hú-Akbar*,—‘God is great.’ He then folds his hands in front of his body, muttering sentences from the Koran. Then he stoops forward, putting his hands on his knees, as if making a low bow, and cries again, ‘God is great.’ Then he raises himself, and standing bolt upright, utters the same cry. Then, still muttering verses from the Koran,

he drops down on his knees, making his nose to touch the ground, with his open palms on the ground on each side of his head. In a minute or two he raises his head and body, still muttering his Arabic: then bringing himself into a sitting or squatting posture, with his body resting on his heels, and his hands on his knees, he concludes his first *Rekah* of devotion. They look very solemn: much more than Greeks or Romanists at their devotions. If a lady goes into any church in France or Italy, she will soon find her dress attracting the eyes of the devout. One here is kneeling on the ground: another before some lighted candles: another before an image of the Virgin. But they have time to look about them, and to examine the lady's dress as she rustles through among them, lifting it up with their hands, and scrutinizing it all ways, while still holding the crucifix and muttering their Latin prayers. Not so a Mahomedan. He is wholly shut up within himself. He looks at nobody till he has finished his *Rekah*. I was told that these gestures and postures required by the prophet for prayer, are very difficult to learn, being much more minute and intricate than they appear. The performance of these is a part of the education of children. And no one can excel a Mahomedan at these devotional mechanics. With him, prayer is the mere working of a piece of machinery five times a day.—*Christian Treasury for 1859*, p. 498.

To whom is prayer to be directed?

“To thy Father which is in secret.”

You go to God, Christian! You find Him when you go. He is in secret. He sees you, though you behold not Him. He hears you, though no whisper betrays His presence, not a sound tells of His footsteps.

Pray to “your *Father*.” This, of course, can belong only to one in Christ. You are to draw nigh with *love*; for He loves you; drew you to Himself when you were at enmity; gave His Son's blood, as the ransom price for you. Go with affection! Your troubles are felt by Him. Your welfare is dear to Him. You may tell Him of all that concerns you. Pray to *your Father*!

What an advance upon the prayers of the law! “I have hearkened unto the voice of *the Lord my God*, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from Thy holy habitation, *from heaven*, and bless Thy people Israel, and *the land which Thou hast given us* :” Deut. xxvi. 14, 15.

Go with *reverence*. He is no earthly father: though toward such, a child should be respectful and reverent. He is your Father in heaven, the Great God, Creator and Preserver of all. Remember your nothingness, and be awed. He is the Holy God, spotless in purity: and you a sinner, only able, through abounding grace, to approach Him. Pray to your *Father in heaven*!

The effect of such a coming before God, the God of holiness, cannot but have a good effect on your heart and conduct all through the day. Just in proportion as your prayer has been a real exercise in the presence of the Most High, will it be seen in your feelings, words, conduct, through the day. Here is found the failing of mere formal prayers.

“Prayer is with the Moslem (says another traveller) a simple *performance*. He does it as he eats, sleeps, or dresses. All alike are matters of routine, and of like moment. The Moslem merchant will lie and cheat, and swear and pray, and lie and cheat, and swear again, and these are all (like different scenes in the same drama) quite in their places. The feelings are not in

the least shocked by thus mixing up things sacred and profane ; and the simple reason is, *there is no sacredness in their prayers*. A Moslem emir or pasha will issue his orders for oppression and savage cruelty, and even murder, and when the Muezzin-call is heard, will calmly spread his carpet, stroke his beard, and engage in the exercise of prayer, with a serenity, and (we may add) with a solemnity of countenance, that is altogether wonderful : and when the performance is at an end, he is ready to despatch the same routine of business over again."

"It is never deemed necessary to the efficacy of prayer to have the mind composed, or the thoughts turned heavenward. Prayer is not in the least out of place in the midst of a manifest attempt at fraud and open robbery : nay, the Arab will embroe his hands in a brother's blood, and while the crimson stain is yet fresh, he will lift them up in adoration of the God of peace and love !"—*Porter's Damascus*, pp. 141, 212.

How much even nominal Christians have gained of light and morality from the knowledge of the words and precepts of Jesus !

Then follows the promise.

"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee."

This is a wonderful promise. Its force is quite passed by. But 'tis worthy of deep regard.

'Tis wonderful ! Suppose there were in Norwich a storehouse at which the poor might make daily application for coals and candles, for tea and sugar, for flour and meat, clothes and money—a building whence their wants were supplied without payment,—would it not be considered a great, a surprising boon ? Would it not be thought, that the parties receiving such constant exhibitions of kindness from a wealthy gentleman,

would be deeply indebted to him ; and ought to express their gratitude for so princely an expenditure on their necessities ?

It would scarcely enter any one's head, that bounty could go further. It would be deemed a wild absurdity for any poor widow, who was standing at the office window some hour or more every day, while she was uttering her wants, and receiving what she asked, at the year's end to be expecting *to be paid* by the benevolent man for the time she had spent in putting up her petitions at his office window ! We should resent such a thought, as the extravagance of folly !

But here the greatness of God's grace *promises that very thing*. Prayer daily makes us more and more indebted to God. Each answer is a ship arriving from India, putting into port laden with good things for us. We ask for peace, and we get it. We petition for supply of our need in money, it comes. We ask for relief in pain, 'tis granted. We supplicate for the life, the salvation of some one dear to us : 'tis given. With these gifts our obligations deepen. We are more and more in debt to God.

But now the Saviour assures us, that God will requite these prayers in the coming day, as though *He* were *our* debtor, and not *we His* ! Pray on then, Christian ! Prayer is doubly blessed. It has *two* harvests in its year. It blesses now : it will bless in time to come. You reap its present pleasant fruits. But there is to be a better harvest, a nobler reaping still. Here you get interest for your prayers : at the resurrection you are to receive the principal.

7. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do ; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking."

We are taught by our Lord to be importunate in prayer: that is, to bring the same subject again and again before Him. Is not that a contradiction to the advice given here? No! 'Tis not *repetitions* of prayer which our Lord condemns, but *vain* repetitions.

The heathen repeat again and again their formula of worship *without heart*: imagining that prayer is like a magic charm, in which all that is necessary is to repeat the words. This is quite characteristic of most heathen acts of worship. In India, the missionaries tell us, that the same cry is repeated again and again—'Hurree Bol!' The Buddhist worship has the same fault. Thus, too, did the priests of Baal continue shouting—“O Baal, hear us!”

Now is not the rosary in the very spirit of this forbidden service? It is a devotional instrument, to enable a performer of prayers to tell how many he has said. The rosary requires you to give fifteen repetitions of the Lord's Prayer in Latin, and one hundred and fifty Ave Marias, or ten times as many salutations to the Virgin Mary. Now these repetitions are vain ones. So many repetitions is a point of religious observance, necessary in order to the blessing. Would any believe, except he knew it, that professed disciples of Jesus prescribed the repetition of a certain number of the same forms of prayer as the means of obtaining a spiritual blessing from our Father in heaven? But it is done in cases innumerable! See the results of the shutting up of the Scriptures! “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.”

The secret root of this mistake in prayer is traced for us by our Lord. It arises from false and low thoughts of the Godhead. Man thinks that God is like himself, to be moved with noise.

Let us not confound together much prayer and much speaking. The Saviour warns us against much *speaking*, but not against much *prayer*. God needs not many *words*: not an empty, not an eloquent harangue, to lead Him to give. *Not many words, and no faith, but much faith, and words few and weighty.* Plead thus, and you will be likely to succeed. 'Tis fervour of heart, and assurance of the power of our God, and of the efficacy of the Saviour's intercession, that will lead to prevailing prayer. As one has well said,—‘The arrow that is to enter heaven must be launched from a bow fully bent.’

8. “Become not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.”

What perpetual danger there is in man, of his falling down to the low level of his depraved and ignorant nature! The heathen, left to themselves, with nothing but the works of God around them to tell them what He is, show us what sort of thing man's religion is. In many cases, crimes the most awful are enacted as parts of his worship. And at the best, religion is a lifeless form. They worship the creatures of their own hands, and imagine that a few words addressed to them is enough.

“Your Father knoweth, before ye ask Him, what things ye have need of.”

True views of God are at the foundation of all worship. Our God, the true God, is All-knowing. He does not need to be informed by His worshippers of their wants. He knows them ere they approach.

How remarkable a contrast to this is furnished by the New Zealand worship, as carried on ere the missionaries went over to enlighten them!

Their idols were made of wood a foot or two long, with the figure of a man, or of a human head, rudely carved at the top : the rest of the stick was sharpened to enable the worshipper to fasten it in the ground. It was dressed up with parrot's feathers, bound round with cord, and adorned with red ochra. "When used, the idol was stuck into the ground, not far from which the worshipper seated himself, leaning against a small stone pillar, about a foot high, called a praying-stone. He held in one hand a string, which was attached to the god : and before he offered up his petition, *he gave the string a little jerk, to excite the idol's attention.* When the petition was made, he stuck a little stick in the ground, and then offered another prayer, giving a fresh jerk, and putting another stick in the ground. This was repeated as often as a fresh prayer was made. *The sticks were to remind the god that so many prayers were uttered.* These marks were perhaps to the rude New Zealander, what a string of beads is to a Roman Catholic worshipper."—*Ramsden's Missions.*

But the sentiment taught by the Saviour has been used *against* prayer. 'If God knows beforehand what you are coming to ask of Him, what is the good of it? And how foolish to imagine, that your feeble words shall move the Great Creator! What! do you suppose that His great and wise laws are to give way, for your whispers?'

To which we answer—

1. We do not go to *instruct* God, but to *entreat* Him. A friend tells you that Mrs. Jones has just lost her husband. She is quite destitute. How shall she bury him? Presently after Mrs. J. raps at your door. Would it be enough to say, 'I know, my good woman, what you are come about.' 'Do you, sir? Then I trust you

will be the more ready to grant me aid in my distress.' And then with moving words and flowing tears she spreads her case before you. Will you say, that it was of no use for such an one to come and plead? Thousands have learned in like cases, that it has been of mighty benefit to plead before those that were made aware before they came of their sorrowful circumstances.

2. But even if we could not see what was the good of it, it would still be our duty and our interest to go to God in prayer. *He has appointed it.* He *commands* prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you." It must be of great importance then to obey. It honours God. It is His decreed way for us to attain our blessings.

'But do you suppose a miracle is to take place on your behalf, every time you go to prayer? Are God's laws to be turned out of their railway level, laid down by infinite wisdom, just to please you?'

(1) Certainly not. God can and does answer us by means of the laws He has appointed. A poor widow, on rising in the morning kneels in her attic, and craves food of God for herself and little boy. She has none. God disposes the heart of a Christian lady to visit that house and its attic that day, and leave a shilling. Or her son goes out into the street: a humane grocer wants a boy in his shop. He is pleased with the lad's appearance, learns that he has no work, engages him. Here is God's answer. There is no miracle! But there is a reply to the prayer of the morning, as much as if an angel bore the bread in a basket from the sky.

(2) But, to say the truth, if it were even necessary to suspend or alter one of God's laws in order to grant a prayer, I believe it is not presumptuous to suppose God would do it. I grant the Supreme, Eternal Majesty of Jehovah, Creator and Preserver. But I go to Him

as to my *Father*. Is there nothing in that title, which leads me to believe that God is ready to listen to me, and willing to bid his regulations pause and bend, if it be for my profit or preservation?

Her Majesty Queen Victoria has appointed to review a large body of troops on Hounslow Heath, on Wednesday, 18th of June. Regiments from all parts of the kingdom are put on their march. Artillery and ammunition are preparing; accoutrements getting ready; parties making for the occasion; generals and officers are to be on the ground on that day. But on the Monday, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is taken very ill. Some one tells him of the intended review, and the splendour of the sight. 'Your mother is to be there.' 'Oh, no! I cannot bear to have my mother leave me. She *must* countermand it.' 'How presumptuous of you! She, the great sovereign of the British Isles, indeed, to alter her wise arrangements and disappoint so many great men, and such thousands of spectators for *one!*'

I should think that would scarcely silence the Prince of Wales. I should imagine he would be ready to conceive, that his informant was joking him. Would he not say, if he thought it seriously meant?—'Great she is, but she is *my mother!* Is it anything very presumptuous to suppose that she loves me, and will listen to the petition of *her son?*' Would you conceive it impossible to believe, that after that prayer offered by her son, a royal letter was received by the commander-in-chief, telling him it was Her Majesty's good pleasure that the review should be put off till further notice?

So neither do I think it incredible, that if it were necessary for my good, God, my Father in heaven, would suspend one of His laws; that where one of His

express trains would crush me, if it continued its present speed and direction, he would make signal that it should slacken speed, till I have got across the line.

The beauty of this portion of our Lord's words has been much more impressed on me since I read the following incident.

A Christian traveller was crossing the desert of the Red Sea. He had some Bedouins for his guard. One evening he lay down to rest in his tent, but could not sleep. There was an alarm of the probability of a night-attack of robbers. He left his tent and drew near his guard's fire.

"My guards made room for me as I came near.

"My presence, he says, did not much disturb the loquacity of my guards; but I paid little heed to their rapid conversation, till the sheik, turning suddenly round on me, exclaimed—

"'What strange men you Englishmen are!'

"'How so?' I asked, 'why strange?'

"'You never fast,' said he.

"'Not often,' I replied laughingly; 'that is, when we can get anything to eat.'

"My Arab friend laughed too, for that evening we had supped sparsely from necessity. 'But,' said he, 'is it not part of your religion? You don't pray: you don't give alms: you do nothing.'

"This was a home-thrust, and my conscience felt it. I had looked upon the poor fellows around me so bigoted in their faith, and had considered myself so completely in their power, that I deemed it prudent to avoid every topic that might arouse their passions. In my solitary tent at mid-day I read the word of life: but I had concealed with jealous care from my guards

the knowledge that I carried about with me the 'Christian's Koran:' and when at morn and night I commended myself in prayer to God my Maker through Christ my Saviour, I had drawn close round me the curtain of the tent, and whispered low and fearfully, lest I should be overheard.

"'You have no religion,' said the sheik, 'you don't pray: you do nothing.'

"God forgive me,' I thought: 'the rebuke is not altogether unjust.'

"'Now we'—continued my reprovor, and he went on boastingly to tell what their prophet required of them, and how faithful was their obedience in matters of devotion, charity, and self-denial: and while he spoke I lifted up my heart to God, and sought courage to bear a feeble testimony to His word. When the sheik paused, I put my hand into my bosom, and drew forth a New Testament. 'I have religion,' I said, 'would you like to hear what it teaches on these high matters?'

"By this time the attention of all my guard was directed towards me. Their quick sparkling eyes were fixed fiercely, as I thought, upon me, their dark visages looked more grim by the flashing fire around which they were seated: and their hands were ready to grasp a weapon that would speedily bring down vengeance upon the head of the infidel dog who dared to blaspheme against their prophet.

"'Listen,' I said, as I opened the Testament at the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. 'You speak of alms-giving; hear what my Koran says about alms:' and I rendered into Arabic the four first verses, 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when

thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.' When I stopped, I looked up, and the dark countenances around me were glistening, but not with anger.

"'Good,' exclaimed the sheik; 'this is very good: go on.'

"I gathered courage, and read again—'And when thou prayest,' translating as I read, to the fifteenth verse. 'Bismillah! but this is wonderful, wonderful,' exclaimed one to another, stroking their beards: 'wonderful!' and every harsh and forbidden feature was softened down, to quiet, calm attention. 'More, more!'

"I read on—'Moreover, when ye fast,' etc.

"'Bismillah,' exclaimed the sheik, 'this is wonderful.'

"I needed no further urging on: verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph, I read on to the close of the chapter, interrupted by exclamations of wonder and approbation.

"'Wonderful!' said my worthy friend, the sheik, when I at length closed the book: 'but this is wonderful! *And what good people you Christians ought to be!*'"

This is the verdict of an enemy, beloved. Taught as they have been from their earliest youth to despise Jesus, Son of Mary, as far inferior to Mahomet, they could but own, as they heard His words—"But this is

wonderful!" Yes, and what manner of persons ought we to be who have such a Master? and who, lest His words should prove a dead letter, sent down His *Spirit* on earth to enable us to carry His words into effect. What is it we want? With increased spirit and zeal to obey that word,—“Enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret.” Such an increase of prayer would make itself felt in every direction, both among ourselves,—removing party-spirit, and silencing evil words, and swellings, and backbitings; and on the godless around, making them feel there is reality in our faith, and sinfulness in their career, filling their hearts with awe as they listen to God’s word, and turning them to God.

“*When thou prayest,*” says our Lord. Does every reader pray? No! Do you pray? If not, you do not know God as your Father. You think of Him only as the Ruler, forbidding what you love, and opposed to you, because of your sins; and the Judge coming to condemn you.

Ought you not to pray? Ask Scripture! Ask conscience! Is it not the duty of a creature to worship his Creator and Preserver? Ought not a creature to acknowledge its God? You acknowledge your superiors, or your equals, by a bow. Ought you not to render *God His* due? You are daily dependent on His goodness! Is it right thanklessly to swallow all His mercy: to render no praise in return?

He bids you pray! Ought you not to listen? Should not the law of the King of kings be obeyed?

Ought you not to pray? What will become of those who never pray? When the throne is set for judgment, what will become of the unforgiven? And how can they be forgiven who never asked forgiveness? Reader,

would you wish to be damned? If not, let then the word of Christ convict you no longer of sin.

“*When thou prayest.*” Begin to-day. Each week a day is set apart for these sacred exercises. You cannot say, you have no time. To-day God appeals to you. Go in secret. Pray first for what is first needed, forgiveness of sins. Be no longer worse than the heathen: with greater light, be not worse than the Mahometan. Five times a day he renders to God what he accounts worship. His God indeed is content with mutterings of the lip and bendings of the knee. Our God, the true God, asks the heart, without which prayer is a vain shadow. Ought *He* to ask less? Ought you to give less?

The Mahometan appeals to his God through Mahomet. Affecting to me was the prayer, which the pilgrim to Medinah puts up. “We, thy friends, O prophet of Allah! appear before thee, travellers from distant lands and far countries, through dangers and difficulties, in the times of darkness, and in the hours of day, longing to give thee thy rights [honouring the prophet] and to obtain the *blessings of thine intercession; for our sins have broken our backs, and thou intercedest with the Healer.* And Allah said,—‘And though they have injured themselves, they came to thee, and begged thee to secure their pardon, and they found (God an acceptor of penitence, and full of compassion.’ O prophet of Allah, intercession! intercession! intercession!”

From far the Mussulmen travel to the grave of their prophet, to obtain his favourable regard, to ask his prayers for them. Will you refuse in your own land to call upon the True Prophet, the Great Atoning Priest? Mahomet hears no prayer of his disciples; his ears are sealed in death. Jesus “ever lives to make *intercession*”

for you! Do not those words beat upon your heart?—*“Our sins have broken our backs, and thou intercedest with the Healer.”* Have you less sense of sin than they? Does not that thrice repeated word touch you?—*“O prophet of Allah, intercession, intercession, intercession!”* Will you not draw nigh to the Son of God and ask Him with like zeal for your forgiveness,—*“O Son of God—intercede, for else I am lost! intercede! INTERCEDE!* If you do not, will not these arise against you in the judgment, and condemn you; for they are more earnest with a false prophet, and a dead ear, than you with a living Saviour, and the Son of God slain “for your sins.”

9. “After this manner therefore pray YE. ‘Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.’”

At this point I can imagine a plausible objection raised. “Do you use the Lord’s prayer?”

No!

“Either then the Sermon on the Mount is not intended for us; or you are inconsistent, in not making use of the *Lord’s* prayer.”

How shall we answer it? Very easily.

What, we inquire, is our Lord’s design in giving the prayer? Evidently, as a model for supplication, not as a form which must always be used. This I gather—

1. From the fact, that the Saviour, after having warned us against the heathens’ use of vain repetitions, and their much speaking, gives this as an example on the contrary, of brevity and concise fulness of meaning.

1. “*After this manner pray ye.*” Here is your model!

2. It comes expressly as a consequence from the principle just laid down. “After this manner *therefore* pray ye.”

3. It is proved by His setting the disciples as the intelligent contrast to the senseless heathen. “After this manner pray ye.”*

‘But,’ it may be replied, ‘the other occasion on which our Lord spoke the prayer, binds it on us more strictly than here. If you will turn to Luke xi. 2, you will see that Jesus, in giving the form, said, “*When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.*”’

1. Yes; but notice also, that on that occasion there was a very serious defect in the mode of asking. “Lord, teach us to pray, *as John also taught his disciples.*”

From this it seems fair to infer, that John gave his disciples a set form, and that the disciple, therefore, who addressed our Lord, was asking for a form of prayer, without enquiring whether a form was best for prayer.

2. But that the Lord’s Prayer was not designed to be the constant form of petition to God seems clear, by comparing the words of Luke with those of Matthew. The genuine copy of the prayer, as given by late critics, is as follows:—

“Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

Here are but five petitions, in place of the seven of Matthew’s; and no doxology.

3. Our Lord at the close of His career, when telling His disciples of His own departure, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit, discloses to them a new era in

* The “Ye” is emphatic in the original.

prayer which was then to commence. "*Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full:*" John xvi. 24.

4. Lastly, it does not appear, that the apostles or disciples understood our Lord to require the use of the prayer as a form of words. On more than one occasion they are exhibited to us as praying: when Matthias was chosen, and after they were threatened by the Sanhedrim: Acts i. 24; iv. 24. But, while their supplications are given, there is no mention of their use of the Lord's Prayer.

The Saviour's Prayer then is to serve us as a model for our addresses at the throne of grace. Let us then notice its structure. It consists of seven petitions, divided into four and three. In this case the three precede, and are very evidently distinguished from the four which follow. The three first seek the glory of God; the four last take up the weakness and poverty of man. The distinction is thus clearly exhibited by a German writer:—

- 1. *Thy* name be hallowed.
- 2. *Thy* kingdom come.
- 3. *Thy* will be done.

But the key-note of the after-part is different.

- 4. *Us* give daily bread.
- 5. *Us* forgive our debts.
- 6. *Us* lead not into temptation.
- 7. *Us* deliver from evil.

We are instructed then to approach God with the *confidence of sons*; and, in the spirit of adoption, to cry, *Abba, Father*. We are to come "with reverence." This Father is "*in heaven*." Under the law, God was as a king dwelling among his subjects on earth. But

now the Son of God has revealed the Father, and Himself is inhabiting the heaven, to draw our hearts thither where our portion is.

We are to address *God* alone, not saints or angels. We are to remember our oneness with other believers, and to say, not, "*My* Father," but "*Our* Father."

"Hallowed be Thy name." The name of God is holy. We have not to make it so; but we desire that its holiness, its super-eminent majesty above all other names, may be recognized.

We pray then, that God may be known in His new Gospel name, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Matt. iii. 28. We desire that the glories of His character may be perceived; and that men and believers may, in consequence, render Him the reverence of obedience, of worship, and of love. Greatly is His name profaned on earth, by constant disobedience, by false views, by blaspheming, and cursing. 'Tis not to be so with us. 'May Thy *due* honour be given Thee, O God: may it be given to Thee *alone!* Deliver us from atheism, which refuses Thee Thy due; deliver us from idolatry, which gives to others that which is due to Thee alone!'

10. "Thy kingdom come."

What kingdom is here supposed? Most understand by it,—The Gospel. But has not the Gospel already arrived? How are we to ask for its coming? This difficulty is so well understood, that those who so understand the kingdom are compelled to alter the terms of the prayer, and beseech the *extension of* God's kingdom.

This should be proof sufficient, that their conception of the kingdom is different from the Saviour's. Jesus

speaks of it as a kingdom yet to *come*. It must mean then the kingdom of glory, the *millennial* kingdom. As the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, and of this gospel, we ought to have right views of it. We are to *seek* the kingdom as something *future*; not to *lay hold of it*, as something *already before us*, and possessed by us as believers.

The present is the time of Satan's kingdom. His throne is on earth: Rev. ii. 13. He is Prince of the world. We ask that God would overturn his throne, and dispossess the Usurper.

10. "Thy will be done, on the earth, as it is in heaven."

It has been proposed to apply the concluding clauses of this sentence to the whole of the first three petitions.

Hallowed be Thy name,	} As in heaven, so on earth.
Thy kingdom come,	
Thy will be done,	

But it does not suit well with the second. The kingdom has yet to come to the heaven, as well as to the earth. This is proved by Rev. xii. As soon as Satan is cast down, a little before he is bound, the cry goes up—"Now is come . . . the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." "Therefore rejoice, ye *heavens*, and ye that dwell in them: Woe to the inhabitants of the *earth!*" vcr. 10—12.

What is the meaning of "Thy will be done?"

There are two wills of God: (1) His *secret* providential will, which over-rules all His creation. (2) His *revealed* will, by which He declares His good pleasure to His intelligent creatures, requiring their compliance.

1. We desire then with regard to God's *revealed*

will, that all His intelligent creatures should obey His commands. This is the doing His will *actively*.

2. But the Saviour's words in the Garden show us, that the endurance of the Father's providential good pleasure, or the patient and confiding reception of His afflictions, are included in this petition. "*Not my will, but Thine be done.*" "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

A celebrated divine of New England tells us, that soon after the death of his wife, his two lovely children were taken from him within a few hours of each other. "My cup of sorrow," he says, "was filled to the brim. I stood a few moments and viewed the remains of my two darlings who had gone to their long homes, never to return. I felt at first as if I *could not* submit to such a complicated affliction. My heart rose in all its strength against the government of God, and then suddenly sank under its distress [to a degree] which alarmed me. I sprang up, and said to myself, 'I am going into immediate distraction: I must submit, or I am undone for ever.' In a few moments I was entirely calm, and resigned to the will of God. I never enjoyed greater happiness than during that day and the next. My mind was full of God. And I used to look toward the burying-ground, and wish for the time when I might be laid beside my departed wife and little ones." *

* It is to the spirit of submission that God would bring His children. When that is obtained, the rod is often removed. Two remarkable examples are afforded in the life of that eccentric servant of God, the Rev. John Berridge.

"At an early period of my life it pleased God to afflict me with blindness, and when I had become stone blind, the Lord said to me, 'Jack Berridge, how likest thou *that?*' And I said, 'Lord, it is Thy will, and THY will be done.' After a

But a standard is exhibited, according to which we desire that God's will may be done. On earth there are confusion, rebellion, blasphemy. But among the unfallen angels, there are a spirit and conduct wholly opposite. In heaven God's will is done exactly, lovingly, with alacrity, completely, purely, and constantly. We pray that such a holy, happy state of things may have place in earth.

A little boy rehearsing this prayer after his mother, in place of—"Thy will be done," said "My will be done." His mother corrected him, but still he repeated the same words. "My dear, it is the will of God, not your will, for which you should pray. It is not fit that your will should be done. You know very little, and would often desire things amiss." "Yes, mother," replied he, "I know that my will is not to be done: but prayer is asking God for what we wish, and I do wish my will to be done." This is the secret feeling of many hearts: 'tis the prompting of nature in young and old. 'Tis very hard to submit to God's rule, when His providence is a sword that cuts deep. When an only child is taken—a blooming youth opening into fair promise—when a loving wife is rent from the side—'tis no easy task to acquiesce, and say, "Thy will be done."

When one enquired of a deaf and dumb boy, why he thought he was born deaf and dumb?—taking the time it was His good will to restore my sight to me, and I have since seen as well as any man to the present hour. At a later period of my life, it was His good pleasure to afflict me with deafness, and, when I had become quite deaf, the Lord said to me, 'Jack Berridge, how likest thou that?' I said again, 'Lord, it is Thy will, and THY will be done.' And, after a time, it was His good will to remove my deafness also, so that I have heard perfectly well to the present time."

chalk, he wrote on the board, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Great part of the joy of heaven will consist in a heart fully attuned to the government of God: and its perfection will be, that God will then have no need to inflict pain.

When one said to a pious man on a sick bed, "If God were to put it to your choice whether to get well or to die, which would you choose?" "I would just leave it with Him." "But suppose that He were to refer it to you?" "I would just refer it back to Him again." How happy a state! The contrary feeling indulged will exclude from millennial bliss. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer:" 1 Cor. x. 10.

This petition, as taught us by the Saviour, Who is in perfect harmony with the will of His Father, must one day be accomplished. That happy day is the kingdom of heaven, or the millennial reign of our Lord. Indeed, all the three first petitions point to this one time, and will be fulfilled then.

11. "Give us to-day our necessary bread."

Great is the discussion concerning the meaning of the Greek word which we translate "daily." It is a word so uncommon, as not to be found in any other Greek writing. The meaning will vary, as we decide concerning its derivation. Some would translate it "to-morrow's." "Give us to-day to-morrow's bread." There is much in favour of this rendering.* It is supposed, however, to clash with verse 34 of this chapter. 'Will it not be caring for to-morrow, to pray for it?' I think not. It seems the very way pre-

* Jerome, in the Hebrew gospel of the Nazarenes, found the word representing it to be מחר.

scribed to us to get rid of care. "Be careful [anxious] for nothing, but *in everything by prayer* and supplication, with thanksgiving *let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep [guard] your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus :*" (Greek.) Phil. iv. 6, 7.

But the difference between this and the rendering "necessary," is not great.

The Saviour teaches us to bring to God our daily need, as being inhabitants of the body, and of the world. We may ask for necessaries, assured of their being granted. We may not petition for great stores, nor expect to see "much goods laid up for many years." The kingdom of Christ may come very speedily. In a moment His saints may be caught away to His presence.

This petition teaches us to confess our dependence for daily support on God's care. "*Give us our bread.*" The stoutest arm will not win its subsistence, without our Father's will. The weakest can obtain it, when given of God. In troublous times and desolate places, God is still able to give, and willing.

12. "And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors."

'Does this petition apply to believers of the Church, members of Christ? Is it not written?—"In Whom we have . . . the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace :"' Eph. i. 7.'

Yes! for though our "old sins" are forgiven, when first we believe, yet do we daily sin, and need daily forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us*

our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness :" 1 John i. 8, 9.

This is the only conditional petition of the seven. 'Tis inserted, no doubt, because of its necessity. Jesus afterwards shows us by the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, that even after sin has been forgiven to a believer, it is thrown back upon him, if he refuses to forgive an offending brother : Matt. xviii. 23—35.

The same sentiment is repeated by our Lord in Mark xi. 24—26. "And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Methinks this petition is often passed by in silence where the Lord's prayer is repeated. The conscience of the utterer checks him. 'To ask to be forgiven *as* you forgive, is to pray that you may NOT be forgiven; for remember the grudge you owe to ——.' But the leaving out the petition will not prevent its taking effect. He who repeats the petition with careless lip but unforgiving heart, will be self-condemned. He prays for wrath on himself. But he who passes it by, will not escape the just anger of God.

How sad was the end of Queen Elizabeth! She had given her favourite, the Earl of Essex, a ring with the promise, that if at any time her anger rose against him, upon sending her that token, she would forgive. She was incensed against him, and his life hung in the balance. She was continually expecting that the ring would be presented to her, and was ready then to fulfil her royal promise. As it never came she signed his death-warrant, and he was put to death.

She discovered afterwards, that the ring had been

given by Essex to the Countess of Nottingham, to be delivered to her majesty. But the Earl of Nottingham, the deadly foe of Essex, prevailed on her never to present it. When the Countess lay on her death-bed, she communicated the sad secret to the Queen. Her tenderness for the Earl at once revived. She fell into a fearful rage, shook the dying Countess in her bed, and left her saying, "*God may forgive you, but I never will.*" She then fell into a state of despondency, and died a few days after.

13. "And lead us not into temptation."

There are two senses of temptation; in one of which it is impossible for God to tempt; in the other, it is here and in other Scriptures assumed, that He *does* tempt.

The devil tempts, by presenting something pleasant or advantageous, which cannot be obtained save by sin, desiring that the sin may be committed; and doing his best to quicken the desire for it, and to blind the understanding and conscience to a perception of the evil of it. In this sense, God cannot tempt. He cannot infuse evil into the mind or heart; nor desire to sway the mind of any to choose the evil, and refuse the good.

But He can and does tempt, in the sense of putting both His people and the ungodly into circumstances of trial, in which the tendencies of each shall be seen.*

Thus God tempted (tried) Abraham (Gen. xxii. 1), by the command to offer up Isaac. He stood the trial, and glory and the oath of promise were the result.

So God tempted (or "proved") Israel in the desert,

* This sense of temptation had better, methinks, be severed from the other by the use of another word. Our translators frequently employ the unexceptionable word "prove:" Ex. xx. 20, &c.

by the waters of Marah. They stood not the test; but fell into sin, and murmured: Ex. xv. 25. God tried them again by the manna. "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day; *that I may prove [tempt] them, whether they will walk in My law, or no:*" Ex. xvi. 4. So again by the terrors of Sinai. "God is come to *prove [tempt] you, that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not:*" Ex. xx. 20. The principle is still more fully stated in Deuteronomy. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to *prove [tempt] thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no.* And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knowest not, neither did thy fathers know: that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord:" Deut. viii. 2, 3.

The trial is felt in its intensity, and the issue is sin, where even renewed man is left to make his own free choice. Of this an instance is given us in the history of Hezekiah. His life was spared in answer to prayer, and a miracle wrought on the occasion. The effect on the sun called forth an embassy from the king of Babylon. This elevated Hezekiah to pride, and the result of the trial was sin. "In the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land. [earth]. GOD LEFT HIM, to try [tempt] him, that He might know all that was in his heart:" 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

Thus to tempt men is God's just right. It is the same in principle as the father's right to set his boy a difficult sum, when he wishes to discover how far he is advanced in arithmetic; or to give him a difficult passage of Horace to translate, that he may learn what is his proficiency in classical studies.

The petition before us teaches us, that the Enemy has no power to tempt us, save as granted of God. That is vividly exemplified in the case of Job. God proves him with affliction after affliction; but the limit is always set to Satan's power.

It is glorious, no doubt, to stand the trial, and to come off victorious. It was so to Abraham on Mount Moriah. Confidence in our powers might lead us to desire to be put to the proof. How many have fancied, that if tried as our first parents were in Eden, they would have stood! But our Lord, Who knows that the flesh profits nothing, teaches us the blessedness of poverty of spirit. And let us gladly acquiesce in the sense of our weakness which prompts the petition,—“Lead us not into temptation.” The longer we know the evil of our hearts, the more fervently will like petitions be offered.

13. “But deliver us from evil.” *

‘Not only, Lord, do not bring on us fresh trial; but remove from us the various evils which encompass us. Deliver us from the evil of the world, of Satan, of our own wicked hearts. Remove from us pain, calamity, death.’ This breathes a wish for the final deliverance of both soul and body. It is a petition, therefore, if taken in its fullest sense, for the coming of the millennial kingdom.

* Some would translate, “From the Evil One.” But I prefer the A. V.

The doxology which follows this petition is now generally acknowledged not to be genuine. It arose out of the use of the Lord's Prayer as a church formula, and is not found in the earliest manuscripts.

14. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The one conditional petition of the prayer is now explained. Jesus tells us why He inserted the condition. It is because, without its fulfilment, we cannot be pardoned of God. In this place “men” are to be forgiven. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant we are taught, that our *brethren* in Christ, if desiring it, are to be forgiven.

Jesus, Who knows the vindictive nature of men, how slow they are to forgive, how apt to harbour malice, here insists on the forgiveness of those who offend against us, as we desire the forgiveness of our offences against God.

If not forgiven of God here, there will of course be no entrance into the kingdom of Messiah. Nay, the parable of Matthew xviii. teaches, that positive punishment, of the most awful kind, awaits the unforgiving. “His lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses:” Matt. xviii. 34, 35.

We are to pray that God's kingdom may come; but no joy will it be for us, if we are excluded.

The force of this truth was once happily used by Wesley. “While travelling in Georgia, I picked up

the following anecdote of John Wesley and General Oglethorpe. It seems that these two gentlemen were fellow-passengers from Europe. In the course of this voyage, Mr. Wesley heard General Oglethorpe making a great noise in the cabin, upon which he stepped in to know the cause. The General immediately addressed him, saying :

“ ‘Mr. Wesley, you must excuse me ; I have met with a provocation too great for man to bear. You know the only wine I drink is Cyprus, as it agrees with me best of any. I provided myself with several dozen of it, and this villain (his servant, who was present, almost dead with fear) has drank up the whole of it. But I will be revenged on him. I have ordered him to be tied hand and foot and to be carried to the man-of-war, which sails with us. The rascal should have taken care how he used me so, *for I never forgive.*’

“ ‘Then, sir,’ said Mr. Wesley, looking calmly at him, ‘I hope *you never sin.*’

“The General, confounded at the reproof, threw his keys to his servant, and bade him do better for the future.”

FASTING.

Matt. vi. 16—18.

THE faith of Christ is like some ancient gothic building devoted to religious services, which successive generations have altered to suit their taste ; here white-washing marble, there bricking up an arch, and yonder plastering up a window. Hence, he who will study the words of Christ and His apostles, not unfrequently comes upon some truth or some precept, long obstructed and lost sight of ; and he stands delighted like one who finds some beautiful, long-desolate chamber. The Christianity of any day since the apostles is not the perfect system that proceeded from the hand of the Redeemer. Here there have been additions, there subtractions from the truth. Thanks be to God, that we have His pure word, to which we may make appeal !

Are not these thoughts naturally suggested by the subject before us ? ‘Fasting ! Is not that a *Roman Catholic* observance ?’ Not unless our Lord Jesus Christ was a Roman Catholic teacher ! Whose words are these ?

16. “Now when ye fast, become not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward at once. 17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face : 18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee.”

I shall first expound the words, then consider the duty of fasting.

The Saviour's method in enforcing this part of righteousness, is the same which He adopted in the former two. He first cautions us against the false practice, then exhibits the true.

Our Lord brings before us false fasting, as displayed in its (1) Mode, its (2) Motive, and its (3) Results.

1. Fasting was a thing right in itself; but, as observed by the Pharisees, it was evil. It is a secret observance of religion. But its unobtrusiveness displeased the Pharisee. He therefore put on a sad expression of countenance. Nor was that enough: "he disfigured his face." He did not wash himself, or bathe as usual. He probably put dust and ashes on his head, face, and beard. Perhaps he covered his head, and clothed himself with sack-cloth. As far as possible, he put off his usual appearance. This was the faulty MANNER of his fast.

2. It sprung from a corrupt MOTIVE. Abstinence from food is a thing secret to all, except the inmates of the individual's house. This did not suit the intention of these pretenders. They would have every one know, and say—'*That man is fasting.*' They took care, therefore, to hang out the signs of it. This was hypocrisy. Fasting properly is a religious act offered to God. They disregarded God, and addressed man. The outside of the cup was fair: within, it was foul. Hypocrisy is hateful to God. Let us perceive, that we have to do with the word of God, which is "living, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*:" Heb. iv. 12.

Yes! the Word of God is an index of the mind of the Great Person in Whose sight we are manifest, and to Whom we must give account. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do." Look to your motives, reader, for Christ looks to them! Such as your motives are, such are your actions in God's sight. Such as the seed is, such is the plant. If the motive be holy, if the act be done to God, 'tis good. At the collection the other day, why did you drop your shilling into the plate? Was it because you thought you must, or people would think it mean, and perhaps speak to you about it? If that were your motive, 'twas not done from love to God, or meant for His eye, but arose from fear of man.

3. Jesus would have us notice also the RESULTS. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward at once." In the same terms on the three occasions, our Lord exhibits the consequences of false service. It was an arrow shot at an earthly target. It hit the bull's-eye there, and gained a name among the bowmen of earth. But it was not aimed heavenward. Such archery would win no reward there. This then is a specimen given to us of a combined fault and folly, to be avoided by every disciple.

But Jesus next exhibits TRUE FASTING, and under the same three divisions of (1) Manner, (2) Motive, (3) Result.

Hear then the true disciples' MANNER of fasting. "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face."

Jesus does not bid us give up the practice, because, though good in itself, it had been so abused.

1. He would have His servant dress and prepare himself as usual. The command concerning the washing

of the face, and anointing of the head, seems to intend this. For we find, that when David's fast for his child was broken by its death, "he washed and anointed himself:" 2 Sam. xii. 20; also xiv. 2. The Saviour does not, however, bid His servant to put on a *joyful* look, for that might be quite unsuited to the occasion, and were difficult for one fasting to maintain. He simply forbids the putting on of an uncommon appearance, for the sake of man's favourable notice. Rather seek to elude observation, than to attract it.

2. For your MOTIVE must be right: "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret." Your motive is not an hypocritical one. Your religion looks to God. Then your mode of proceeding will bespeak the purity of your motive. You will not be as the helmsman looking north, and steering south. Your eye will be on the compass, and your ship's course will be true to it. Yours is not the gilding, to catch man's eye; but the gold, to meet God's. Yours is not a smuggler's box, professedly full of glass, really packed with contraband silks. You act to God. He needs no flag to be hoisted in order to let Him know what you are about. Deep does His silent eye dive to the depth of your bosom. Does He approve? Be content!

Let this read us a lesson concerning our present station. Are not some ambitious, and at times discontented with our obscurity, our lowly and unnoticed course of life? Do we at times wish—"O that I were placed in some more public sphere, some arena more fitted to exhibit my abilities, and to win me a great name!" Remember, brother, that every warrior of the cross, even in the lowest ranks, has that distinction which the soldier courts most. *He is*

fighting under the eye of his general. And that Great Captain is impartial. He will promote; often now, certainly at last, according to merit. *He* is looking on, Who will reward. Be content then! Small and unnoticed you may be among men, but it is not they who will apportion your praise or promotion, but "your Father Who sees in secret." Act for His eye, and it will be enough!

3. Soon will come the CONSEQUENCES of all our actions here. The day of the kingdom, and of the crown, is hastening on. Thy Father, if thou have looked to Him herein, will reward thee. These acts pass away, and no notice seems to be taken. It is not fitting that it should. Now is the time of trial. 'Tis a part of our trial to observe if we are, not fitful, but steady workmen; not a John Mark, going forth with Paul and Barnabas, but speedily cooling and returning to his snug fireside. The present is the sowing time. The seed falls without any sound into the earth, but it will be reaped with songs of praise. Harvest, the harvest of the kingdom, the great season when God will be shown to be just, and the sowers carry to the garner as they have sowed, is hastening apace. See that your reward be from your Father above. It will be given openly, when there is no fear of your becoming vainglorious or proud.

This promise is added to the close of each part of the righteousness which God claims, to show His bounty, and to fix your eye on reward; so it be reward of the right *kind*, and at the right *time*. Sense says—"Give me all *now!*" And it eats, yet is not satisfied: it drinks, yet is thirsty still; it hoards, but still feels poverty; it lays up raiment, but feels cold still. Faith says, 'I put my money and my deeds in a savings

box. Once let in through the hole, it cannot be drawn out again. My Father keeps the key. But a day is at hand, in which He will remember what I have entrusted Him with : and then my copper farthings will have turned into golden guineas. I can afford to wait. I dare not build on the quicksand, which swallows up both the house and its builder. Be my mansion beyond death's domains, and sin's pestilential atmosphere !'

And now a word, secondly, concerning the DUTY OF FASTING.

'Duty!' perhaps some may say! Yes, I hope I shall be able to prove it to you.

Fasting then is a voluntary abstinence from food, as a religious service to God. Properly speaking, it is an entire abstaining from all articles of diet, not the substituting one for another, as fish instead of flesh.

This had its place, as a religious observance, under the law. On the great day of Atonement, when the sins of each individual, and of the nation, during the year, were remembered before Jehovah, each Israelite was required to afflict his soul, to cease from his usual pleasures and pursuits, under penalty of being cut off from his people: Lev. xvi. 29, 31; xxiii. 20—32. This all the Jews understand, as a command to cease from eating.

And the practice thus enjoined on one single occasion upon the whole nation, was followed by individual Jews with God's approval.

(1) When under the pressure of fear, and calamity seemingly ready to destroy, the servants of God under the old covenant had recourse to this. Jehoshaphat, when he heard of a vast army that was about to invade his land, proclaimed a fast in all Judah: 2 Chr. xx. 3. And God heard, and gave a splendid deliverance.

(2) When Ezra and his band were about to cross the desert to enter the land of Israel, they fasted because of the dangers of the way; and God was entreated for them and delivered them: Ezra viii. 21. (3) When the Jews, through Haman's malice, were ready to be destroyed, they fasted. When the fate of the nation seemed suspended on the reply which Ahasuerus should give to Esther's petition, she entreated them to fast three days. And wonderful was the answer of the Most High. (4) Even Gentiles thus drew nigh to God with signal success. When the Most High suspended over the guilty city His sore threatening—'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' the people proclaimed a fast and cried, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God:' Jon. iii. 7, 8. "And God repented of the evil which He had said He would do unto them: and He did it not."

(5) Under a sense of the sin of Israel, and in sorrow for his nation, Daniel set himself to fast and pray: Dan. ix. 3. And God was well pleased, and sent Gabriel to comfort His servant with a prophetic answer of blessing. (6) So did Nehemiah and his fellows fast under a feeling of the sinfulness of the heathen marriages into which many had fallen: Neh. ix. 1.

(7) And the Holy One of Israel is Himself pleased to command it to His people, as the attitude to be taken in the great and terrible Day, when His long-forborne vengeance takes effect on the nation: Joel i. 14; ii. 15. "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord."

'But,' it may be said, 'these are observances of the law, and therefore are not examples for us.'

This plea is set aside by our Lord's words. Mark the place here given to fasting, by the Great Teacher of His disciples. May we say, that because alms and prayer were taught and practised under the law, therefore they are not intended for disciples? Surely not!

But Jesus puts fasting upon the same level with alms and prayer. He speaks of each of the three as a part of the righteousness suited for those who would enter the kingdom of God. He rebukes the Pharisees, not for fasting, but for fasting amiss. He raises for His disciples a higher tone, but on the same instrument.

Jesus has indeed graciously set us free from the law's trammels, so that He defines no *time*, as did Moses. Yea, when urged to do so, by John's disciples, He protested against it, as unwise and unsuited both to the new dispensation of grace, and to the position of His friends while He was upon the earth, and they were in attendance on Him. But He adds, that after His departure, there would be a very fitting season for it, and His disciples would then engage in it. 'Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, *and then shall they fast*:" Matt. ix 15; Mark ii. 20; Luke v. 35.

Jesus recommended it to His disciples again, as a means of overcoming evil spirits: Matt. xvii. 21.

For forty days did our Lord fast ere He wrestled with Satan, and overcame him. And the Psalms, more than once, speak of this as a part of the Saviour's practice.

"When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach:" Psa. lxxix. 10. The previous verse is declared to be fulfilled in our Lord: John ii. 17. See also Psa. cix. 24; xxxv. 13. The apostles of our

Lord also observed the practice. Nay, the Holy Ghost was pleased to use the occasion of a fast, to give order for the first missionary embassy to the Gentiles: Acts xiii. 2. The missionary apostles, too, were sent forth on their journey of conflict, with fasting and prayer on the part of the Church. It would seem, also, that fasting, as well as prayer, was the usual accompaniment of the appointment of elders: Acts xiv. 23.

Fasting then is not an unreasonable or superstitious service. Nor must Romanists be blamed simply for defending or observing it. They are wrong in fixing *set times* of fasts: * wrong in not abstaining entirely from food: and worse than all, wrong in the *motive*, in regarding it as a *piece of merit whereby to win eternal life* which is the *free gift of God to the believer*.

* Mahomet, into his false religion, has introduced fasting. During the month of Ramadan, all except babes and the sick are to abstain from sunrise to sunset. "O true believers, a fast is ordained you, as it was ordained to those before you, that ye may fear God. A certain number of days shall ye fast; but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast an equal number of other days. And those who can keep it, and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining of a poor man. And he who voluntarily dealeth better with the poor man than he is obliged, this shall be better for him. But if ye fast, it will be better for you, if you knew it." "The month of Ramadan shall ye fast, in which the Koran was sent down from heaven, a direction unto men, and declarations of direction, and the distinction between good and evil:" *Sale's Koran*, pp. 21, 22. The effects of this Mahometan fast may remind us of a passage of Isaiah. "Positive gloom overhangs the city. The men curse one another, and beat the women. The women beat and abuse the children; the children, the dogs and cats. Seldom is any part of the city without some dispute of vehemence. These quarrels are forbid by Mahomet. But the physical part of the observance is more easy than the moral."—*Burton's Pilgrimage*, p. 108.

But what are the uses of it ?

1. 'Tis the attitude of *humiliation* befitting a creature under sense of sin, or fear of trouble. It combines well with prayer and alms: Isa. lviii. 3—8. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? Because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days:" 1 Kings xx. 27—29. Was this said to a wicked man? How much more may a *believer* hope from the mercy of God his Father, when he prays, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil" ?

2. It is a *means to overcome the flesh*; and in whom is not that enemy of ours too strong? "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have acted the herald to others, I myself should become disapproved" (Greek): 1 Cor. ix. 27. "If ye live after the flesh, ye are about to die (Greek): but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live:" Rom. viii. 13.

Here then are the Saviour's words, the examples of the holy men of both Testaments, the present results of good to be expected, the future reward promised to induce you to observe this. Will you observe it? "*When* thou doest alms,"—I hope, reader, you do. "*When* thou prayest." Do you not? But if you take up and practise these two points of righteousness, why not the third? "*When* thou fastest." He that taught the one, taught the other also.

A word now to the UNGODLY.

Mahomet commanded a month's fast in the year. It is steadily and thoroughly carried out in Mahomedan countries. Take the following as a witness of it:—

"The continuance of the Rhamazan keeps every

thing connected with politics in the most perfect state of stagnation at Constantinople: fasting, praying, promenading all day; and feasting, and making merry all night, is all that is now going on; and everything except such daily business as cannot be interrupted, is put off till the approaching Bairam. The painfully rigid observance which Mahometans pay to the keeping of the fast of Rhamazan throughout the whole month, is most remarkable, and forms a striking contrast to the so misnamed fasts of the Catholic countries. Here no exception is made in favour of a fine piece of fish, or a dainty omelette, under the plea of its not being flesh; nor are any discussions entered into as to what may be eaten and what may not. The term fast, or Isleam, means total abstinence: and from the time the first rays of the sun appear above the horizon, till the Muezzim from the minaret proclaims the hour of sunset-prayer, no morsel of food of any kind passes the lips of the rigid Moslem; and even when the Rhamazan falls in the hottest months of summer, which it sometimes does (the lunar calendar used by the Arabians bringing it, of course, through all the seasons every thirty-three years), the hardy Homal in the streets, and the Caiquee at his oars, toil through the labours of the day, exposed for so many hours to the broiling sun, without permitting themselves even a drop of water to moisten their parching lips. This, however, is not all, for incredible as it may appear, it is no less a fact, that to some of the more rigid Mussulmans, even the hours of sunset scarce can be said to bring a breaking of the fast; since during the night, when it is permitted to eat, they scarce take what is sufficient to support nature. During the month Rhamazan, which thus converts night into day, the nature and habits of the

Turk may be said to become entirely changed. Instead of rising as usual, with the first beams of the morning, and retiring to rest again at a very early hour, he very rarely quits his couch till mid-day, and deprived even of the pleasure of his pipe, thus endeavours by sleep, to get through the weary hours of fast."

"In the evening, the mosques and houses are all partially illuminated—the streets are again filled, and every calire is crowded with smokers, enjoying the so-long forbidden chibouque, and amusing themselves with story-telling, magic lanterns, etc., till morning's dawn again obliges them to commence their rigorous abstinence. Thus passes the Rhamazan at Constantinople, till the part of the Bairam which follows again, restores things to their ordinary course."

And Burton, in his *Pilgrimage to Medina*, testifies: "I found but one patient who would eat (in Ramazan) even to save his life:" p. 108.

There is faith! there is zeal! Now must not God save those who are so zealous? Will they not deserve it? True, there is something of error, but *piety* and *sincerity* of so manifest a hue as *that*, will they not prevail? The Mahometan strict in prayer, alms, fasts, will not he escape at last? Afflicting himself to appease the wrath of God against his sins, will not these good works be set off against his trespasses, and the balance in the day of judgment be in his favour?

By no means! these acts of outward holiness flow from ignorance, superstition, unbelief. They are the nightshade-flowers, that spring from the evil heart of nature. They find and leave the soul still at enmity with God. They are offered to God as the price of salvation. What! shall eternal life be bought by so many brass farthings? 'Tis worth ten thousand talents

every year. Shall these half-pence earn eternity of bliss? No! the Mahometan refuses the only righteousness. He has heard of Jesus, Son of Mary, but he prefers the False Prophet. He denies the Son of God. He will not believe that He rose from the dead. How can he be saved, who makes God a liar, and credits not the testimony He has given concerning His Son?

None but the forgiven are saved! These acts of penance do not procure forgiveness. None but the renewed are saved. These acts renew not the soul!

He would win eternal life, by *doing*. 'Tis to be had only by *believing*. "What shall we *do*," said the men of Capernaum, "that we might work the works of God?" "This is the work of God," said Jesus, "that ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent." "*If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.*"

This is true of *them*. But, O my readers, who live within the sound of the gospel, how much more true of *you*?

How can you be saved, who neglect Christ? and lie quite careless when told, that except you be begotten again of God's Holy Spirit, you cannot be saved?

I know that the unrenewed human heart would rather try and break a hole through God's wall of adamant, than go in at His open door. 'Some great thing! Not to stoop so low! Let me win it as the martyr at the stake, or by the surrender of all my goods!'

But, poor bird, in vain do you beat against the wires of your cage! It will confine you, till the Fowler comes and wrings your neck; unless you escape at the open doorway.

'Tis the *Son of God* Who saves. 'Tis He only Who

can save! 'Tis only the *blood* even of the Son of God that can atone.

Will you not go and tell him that you have long and sinfully kept aloof, desiring *any* way of salvation but through Him; but that you now see your unbelief and throw yourself on Him for pardon? Do! It is for your life! Do, for if you will not be saved by Him, your sins will pluck you to hell-fire for ever.

TREASURES.

Matt. vi. 19—23.

19. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and eating consume, and where thieves break through and steal."

WHAT is treasure? "A stock or store of valuables in reserve." The Lord Jesus then teaches us not to lay up our valuables on earth.

Is that the law's teaching?

The very reverse of it! The law gave lands and houses, and promised treasure on earth as the reward of the keeper of the old covenant.

"If ye walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new:" Lev. xxvi. 3—5, 10.

"Blessed shall be thy *basket* and thy *store*. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy *storehouses*, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and He shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and

in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee *His good treasure, the heaven*, to give thee rain unto thy land in His season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow:" Deut. xxviii. 5, 8, 11, 12.

Accordingly, when the blessing was fully come under the king chosen of God, the treasures of David and Solomon become conspicuous.

"And over the king's *treasures* was Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the *storehouses* in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, was Jehonathan the son of Uzziah: and over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground was Ezri the son of Chelub: and over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the *wine-cellars* was Zabdi the Shiphmite: and over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that were in the low plains was Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the *cellars of oil* was Joash: and over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds that were in the valleys was Shaphat the son of Adlai: over the camels also was Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses was Jehdeiah the Meronothite: and over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagerite. All these were the rulers of the substance which was king David's:" 1 Chron. xxvii. 25—31.

To king Hezekiah the godly, Jehovah gave wealth as his portion, which, with prudence, he stored up.

"And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the *house of his precious things*, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the *house of his armour*, and all that was found

in his *treasures*: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them:" 2 Kings xx. 13, 15.

The possession of earth's fairest land, and enjoyment of the present time, was the portion of the man set under the law, and found obedient to it.

But the New Teacher sets aside this for His disciples.

The worldly, of course, are moved by the flesh, the old well-known springs of human nature. This day and our land are peculiarly overrun by the spirit of accumulation, and the desire of treasure. Business enlarges, and fortunes, that, in days but a generation back, would have been accounted fabulous, are being made. Ability, dexterity, and industry, are on the watch to gain and to hoard. What vast sums are laid out in granaries, wharves, storehouses, mills, machines! And what is the secret idea with which probably every ninety-nine out of a hundred go into business? 'I hope to prosper, and to increase my capital. I expect, if I do well, to lay by my hundred, or thousand, or ten thousand a year, and to lay it up in securities, till I have realized my ten, or a hundred, or five hundred thousand, and then to keep my principal safe, and to live on the interest, to bequeath the undiminished sum to my children.'

Exactly! That is 'laying up treasure upon the earth.' 'Tis a perfect specimen of what the Saviour meant. This is what the worldly naturally do: what the Lord here forbids to disciples.

But why does He forbid it to them? Is there any sin in wealth? No! He persuades them against it, on the ground of their own interests!

'Their own interests!' Yes! He proceeds to discover to us the *imprudence* of such a proceeding.

There are three common forms of treasure, specially in Eastern life.

1. Raiment, or materials for clothing.
2. Eatables, as corn, wine, oil.
3. Precious metals, as silver and gold.

Now our Lord offers to our notice a double insecurity affecting the treasures on earth.

With the possession of a treasure, you need a place, box, chamber, or house, in which to store it. Build your house as appropriate to the treasure as you please, and as stout as you can, there are yet two dangers invading it.

1. The first is a danger from foes *inside* the treasure-house, while outside its walls are quite secure, its locks hold all fast.

'Look at that beautiful wardrobe! full of dresses, of sheets, of blankets, and furs. How its mahogany shines! What first-rate locks! What can injure the treasures there?' Enemies inside! The moth can feed upon the wool unseen, and laugh at your keys.

'Look at those stacks so large, and well got up, and snugly thatched in from all danger of rain! What can injure them?' Foes within! The rats and mice can feast day by day, and night by night, while the exterior looks all sound and perfect.

But suppose that these enemies do not consume your stores of corn, and wine, and oil. You and your

family and your servants must.* The store of eatables must keep diminishing, through your need of it.

2. But there is a second danger; the treasure-house itself may be unable to resist foes *from without*. Some burglars in the night entered into yonder bank, and by skeleton keys and other appliances carried off all the cash and notes found in the safe! That merchant had a well-built ship coming home laden with spices very costly: the storm wrecked her on the very cliffs of England. Yonder farmer had his granary burnt to the ground. His neighbour had his barns unroofed in a gale, and the rain coming down upon the corn, ruined it.

Job was very wealthy one day, and the next his goods were torn away from him. The treasures of Solomon and Hezekiah were borne off by armies of invaders.

Earthly treasures then, under their best conditions, are insecure; and Jesus teaches us, for our benefit, not to entrust our wealth and valuables to custody here below.

'Ought not a Christian then to insure his life, and leave his wife and children & £1000 behind, if he, their supporter, is taken away?' Is that £1000 a treasure on earth? 'Why, yes!' Then the Lord forbids it. 'But it seems necessary. How sad to leave a beloved wife and family to the cold charities of a selfish world.' It were indeed sad to leave them to the world. But I should think a Christian husband

* 'Rust' is not the right rendering of *Bpousis*. 'Rust' is *ros*: James v. 8. *Bpousis* throughout the Old Testament and the New means 'eating' 'food:' Rom. xiv. 17 is a good example of its use. The Italic gave *comestura* as its translation.

would commend them, not to the world, but to *his God!* Is not He able to meet their needs as well when the father is dead as while he is living?

‘But is not a man to use the means, while he trusts in God?’ True, all lawful means. But if treasures below be a means forbid, is he to use them?

20. “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor eating consumes, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

What are “treasures in heaven?” Most can only conceive of a bare salvation; and hence mistake this, and like passages. Barnes says, “To have treasure in heaven is to possess evidence that its purity and joys will be ours.”

By no means. That is possessed by all believers, as the gracious gift of God, independent of their own deserts.

But Jesus is speaking to those, who, as disciples were possessed of eternal life; and is telling them how to obtain treasure in the glory. There will be a mansion for each of the saved, no doubt. But there will be differences in those mansions, according to our use or abuse of the false riches.

Jesus then instructs us to convey our treasures to a place of safety. He discovers to us a region of security never thought of before. Who ever dreamed that we could convey gold to the skies? None but Himself could tell us how to send it thither. ‘Tis by alms in His name. This new discovery arises from His disclosure of the kingdom of heaven. “Seek ye *the kingdom of God*, and all these [necessary] things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it was your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [Greek.] *Sell that ye have, and give alms*; provide yourselves bags

that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth:” Luke xii. 31—33.

This new truth revealed by Christ is designed to set us upon a new course of action. The worldly are guided by truths open to nature’s eye. But the Christian is to steer by a star not visible from nature’s misty plain. New truths render reasonable a change of life and situation. Do you not suppose that many such a conversation as this has taken place? ‘Please, sir, I have come to give up my place.’ ‘Why, John? why? Do I not give you good wages?’ ‘Yes, sir, as times went. *But I’ve heard of something better, sir*; in Australia, I hear, that as much as twenty pounds a week is got by digging gold; so I’m off there.’ Gold-gathering here might do for you when ungodly, Christian; but have you *not heard of something better since?*

Jesus then unfolds to us the superiority of heaven as a place for treasure. There is no enemy there inside the treasure-house. There is no diminution of the store by the necessary calls of daily life. There are no enemies there who break in from without. No thief is in heaven! He cannot climb up thither, or carry his crowbar and dark-lantern thither.

Treasure is good, and you cannot have too much of it, Christian! Prudence and forethought are right. Only mind you put your treasures in the right bank. Put them in the proper place of security, and you may labour to be rich, and have God’s blessing upon you, and your brethren’s too. Take heavenly prudence as your guide, and seek money-bags that wax not old!

How often you hear it said of a deceased person, ‘He left a great property behind him.’ Did he? Did he send for it after he was gone, and get it sent on to him?

No! he was forced to leave it behind him. But could he not have got it sent on before him? Yes, he could! What a fool then he was to *leave it behind!*

This teaching of our Lord is beyond nature. 'Tis folly to it, though it be the wisdom of God. So strange was this doctrine to the Pharisees, who were covetous, that they turned our Lord to ridicule, as a dreaming enthusiast: Luke xvi. 14.

But 'tis strange and sad, that our Lord's words are, not only not received by His disciples and ministers, but that they act and teach directly the contrary.

They are on the alert to obtain a competency, or to get rich. They mean, if possible, to make a round sum, and then drop their anchor in the harbour, and ride out the rest of life in calm and sunshine.

But not only so, they teach others to follow in their steps. They persuade the ungodly poor to lay by money. They originate Clothing Societies, Provident Societies, Savings Banks, and so on. They urge the poor to contribute weekly towards a fund for a time of trial. They ply them with the liabilities to sickness, accident, and death, which everywhere encircle us. 'Will not old age soon come upon you? Would it not be well to make provision for it? Is there not something joyful in the feeling of ownership? Is there not something noble in the sense of independence?'

Now if these things were done by the worldly, we should not wonder. This is human prudence, looking for its harvest here. This is earthly wisdom endeavouring, as far as it may, to fence and fortify itself against the sudden assaults of divine providence in this world of sin: and reckoning with undoubting confidence, that for years untold all will go on pretty much as it does. But when these things are done by

believers, they assume another character. The disciple is exposing his loss of savor. He is urging on the world to a conduct forbidden by his Master. The enemy will soon discover this, and use it against them. Quite unknowingly, and without any such design, they are digging under the foundations of the faith. How directly they are acting against the faith they profess will one day be made known to them, either in argument or in taunt? 'Friend, are not these Provident Societies excellent things? Do they not tend greatly to elevate the masses? How was it that Christ was so opposed to these things? Why did He set Himself to *forbid laying up store against the future?* You and I see full well, that that was not wise, and quite unsuited to present times. Could He be a teacher from God? The words of Jesus might have done very well for His age; but you must forgive my saying (and, I am sure, from your well-known liberality, you will excuse me), that I think the faith of Christ, as well as His practical precepts, are too unearthly and transcendental to be suited to our day!'

Here are the words of a well-known Christian minister, depicting the conduct of a Christian who is to be a pattern to the working classes.

"Richard read in his Bible, 'Owe no man anything,' and in order to make sure, he thought it best to have always something to spare. At the very outset, he bade the winner 'march,' whilst he held the spender by the heel, and would not let him stir a single step till the other was far ahead. And now he begins to find the advantage of this early self-denial. From having a little money at command, he has never on an emergency to borrow at a ruinous usury, and he has been able to pick up at a trifling cost a clock, and a book-case, and

a chest of drawers, when they were going cheap. *And he has discovered that sovereigns are in their habits, somewhat gregarious [apt to go in flocks];* if, like rats, they run away from a tottering house, like storks and starlings they are ready to come and colonize wherever one of their species reports a kind reception. And accordingly, without pinching or scraping, or any shabby expedients, *he finds the little store quietly increasing.* And now it is whispered in the street, that he either means to lease or buy the house in which he has been heretofore a lodger; whilst during the year his neighbour has effected three removals."—*The Happy Home*, p. 47. Also *Best of both Worlds*, p. 22—36.

There are frequent complaints from various quarters, and very just ones, that Christianity is losing its hold of men's minds, and that Christians are becoming more worldly. Is it any wonder, when disciples are running counter to the Saviour's precepts? If the pilot will steer where the chart marks 'shoal water,' it is no wonder if he gets aground at last.

The next verse opens to us the subject in all its depths.

21. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In these profound words, the Redeemer traces for us the effect of treasure upon the possessor's own heart. His observation applies to both precepts. 'Do not lay up treasure on earth; for if you do, your heart will become earthly, like your treasure.'

'Do lay up treasure in heaven; for if it be carried up thither, your soul will mount after it.'

It is a moral certainty, that our thoughts will be with that which engages our heart. Shake the compass

as you will, after the concussion is past, the needle turns again to its polar star above.

This call of our Lord arises out of the change of dispensation. The Jew's heritage was upon earth. His God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *came down to earth* on purpose to dwell with and deliver him. From earth He spoke to Moses in the bush, and to Israel from the top of Sinai. He gave His people the riches of Egypt. He went before His people in the cloud, and opened the sea to make them a road to their earthly heritage. He dwelt on earth in the midst of their camp. His royal tent, and His priestly servants shone conspicuous in the centre of the tribes. He appointed them festivals of rejoicing, after the fields had borne them their yearly wealth. Corn, wine, and oil were theirs, and gold by talents in Solomon's day of glory marched into their land. This was to be their joy.

But sin broke it all. God left His abode on earth. Jesus His Son comes with news of "the kingdom of heaven." He reveals to us disciples our portion there. There are our house, our city, our temple, our high-priest, our substance, our name, our Master, our inheritance, our God and Father. God is calling you up to Himself.

One passage will beautifully show the contrast between the Jew and us. Both Moses and Jesus speak of the heaven, as it stands related to the heritage of the Jew and of the Christian.

"The land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and *drinketh water of the rain of heaven.*" Deut. xi. 11. "*The Lord shall open to thee His GOOD TREASURE, the HEAVEN to give the rain unto thy land in his season.*" Deut. xxviii. 12. Then, the Jews' treasure was to come down out of heaven

upon the earth. Now, ours is to mount up from earth into the heaven.

In these unearthly words of our Master is contained the recipe to be heavenly-minded. You can choose in this matter, and the result will answer your choice. Where shall your treasure be?

1. Seek to obtain earthly treasure, and to keep it, and beyond a doubt your heart will more and more taste of the earth over which its waters flow. There was great danger of evil, even when the world was the promised and allotted portion of the servant of God.

“And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not: when thou shalt have eaten and be full; *then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage:*” Deut. vi. 10—12.

“Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and *thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage:*” Deut. viii. 12—14.

But to seek treasure on earth now when it is forbid, is greatly wrong. *He* will not get his hawk to fly heavenward, who is daily tying it with threads of

purple silk to its perch. The soul has its nest below, and death would be to it but as the cruel spoiler's hand surprising it in the green nook of its delights. If the Lord were suddenly to arrive, those treasures in which his heart is stored must be abandoned, to his loss.

If all things are quietly to flow by us as a river fed by constant springs, if peace is alway to brood over earth and England, the present command may seem out of place. But if Jesus be coming suddenly and noiselessly as the thief, to steal away His watchful ones from the earth, and if those not watchful, but asleep amid cares and pleasures of the world, will be left behind, then this teaching of the Saviour is supremely reasonable. If the world be under judgment, and all its beauty and glory are to be marred in God's Great Day of terror, if Satan, its Great Prince, is about to be cast from his palace into the bottomless prison of the abyss, then lay not up treasure here, in a place ready to be trampled by the invading host of God's wrath.

Are you a “pilgrim and stranger” here? But those who are going away from a place, are packing up their property and selling it, and sending it on before them. Those who are coming in to settle in a place are buying, and unpacking, and furnishing the place of their abode.

The present command of the Saviour gives the solution of a difficulty felt and stated by Wesley. He observes, that godliness, forasmuch as it withdraws a man from idle and worldly company and pleasures, and makes him obliging and careful, and industrious, tends naturally to produce wealth. But on the other hand, wealth has just as strong a tendency to produce worldliness. And thus it seems as if the system of our Lord

wrought naturally, and almost inevitably, to its own undoing.

Here is the reply. That is a spurious Christianity not taught by our Lord, though almost universally practised by His followers, which lays up treasure here. Money rightly bestowed lifts us heavenward.

22. "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

23. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!"

What a lamp is to one moving about a house in the dark, that is the eye to the body. It not only has light itself, but it gives light to the other members. The hand has no light, nor the foot, nor the breast. The eye imparts light for all.

So in the inward man, which is a type of the outer, the conscience is the lamp to the other affections of the man. The conscience must guide, or the other affections stumble and fall.

Of what importance is it then, that these light-imparting, ruling faculties be right! A rope may break, a sail may be rent to ribbons, but if the rudder retain its hold, all may be well. But what if the anchor break, or the rudder be swept away? A soldier may lose his way, and be cut off by the enemy, and the army not feel its loss. But a mistake of the general in command, will sacrifice a thousand lives, or ruin the whole army.

1. If then the eye be single, the whole body will be enlightened. The expression "single," as applied to the eye, is a peculiar one, as there are two in every perfect man. But it refers of course chiefly to its inward soundness. The Lord seems to be regarding

the difficulties which, as He foresaw, these doctrines of His, specially in reference to wealth, would occasion in the minds of many disciples. 'Could He really mean what He said? Could it refer to those of our day? Must it not be intended for *apostles alone*?'

Certainly! *if* the earth were a place of insecurity to *them alone*: or if *apostles'* hearts were the *only ones* liable to be drawn to the earth by the pursuit or love of its wealth!

The difficulty then, as our Lord suggests, lies not in the defect of light, but in the unsoundness of the eye of the observer. Vainly does the sun of noon pour his blaze upon the landscape, if there be a film upon the eye of the beholder. And the difficulty of our Lord's words arises from the friction they create in passing over the heart. There are some who are seized with sudden deafness when any unpleasant order is given: as Nelson put the telescope to his blind eye, when the signal for withdrawing from battle was hung out.

2. It appears to me also, that our Lord designed to teach us that the difficulty of comprehending Him, arises from *doubleness* of vision. When one object is before us, and the eye is fixed on that, our way is clear. You are making your way to the church-spire in the horizon. You will speedily reach it, if you march on, never looking to right or left, and breaking through hedges and leaping ditches in your way.

Christ's words are the light; our conscience, "the eye of our heart."* If both these are right, all is well. Our true position is defined by rays from heaven. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The aim of our life

* This, and not 'the eye of your understanding,' is the true reading: Eph. i. 18.

once rightly apprehended, the past, present, and future revealed, as far as our duty is concerned, we march on with confidence, as amidst the broad daylight.

But what if the ruling portion of the soul be disordered? What if the eye see double? What if its outer coat be so thickened, that not a ray penetrates it? The rest of the body feels it: the whole gropes amidst surrounding day.

So, if the disciple should take a divided aim: if he should say in his heart—'I will lay up treasure in *both* worlds.' At once his view of the Saviour's words will become dim—objections and misinterpretations will becloud his soul. He who should attempt to walk towards two objects, one of which lies north and the other east, would make but sorry progress towards either.

In regard to the meaning of the next words, there are two opinions.

1. The first supposes the Saviour to mean, 'If the light in you be put out, how great is the darkness which ensues. 'Tis a winter's night, and a storm. Extinguish the lamps of the lighthouse, and how thick would the darkness of ocean be!'

2. The other, which is the best sense, is this: 'If the eye, which is the part naturally enlightened, become dark, how very dark will the members that are naturally and originally dark, become! If you are exploring the deep recesses of a cavern, and your torch be put out till it show but a single spark, how fearfully dark will the depths of the cave become!'

If the *conscience* be perverted and set on a false track, how surely will the *blind* and *turbulent passions* and *propensities of the soul* go astray!

Sometimes a ship has been seen, after leaving the harbour, to be pursuing a most strange and devious course, creating anxiety in the spectators' breasts for all on board. And their fears have been realized at length, in the intelligence received, that she had gone to pieces upon some well-known rocks, plainly laid down in the chart. Speculation arises concerning the cause of such strange handling of the vessel, and at length the truth strikes one of the most sagacious. She left harbour with a load of iron. No doubt that affected and disturbed the compass. It pointed widely east of true north, and on being trusted to, as if it gave the true indication, it was followed to the wreck of the vessel and the loss of its crew.

Beware, Christians, of a like error! Do not let your inclinations act as interpreters of Christ's words. Do not let your pursuits and desires run counter to our Lord's commands, or you are heaping iron around your compass. How then should it point to the pole? Your steering then will be wide of port, and toward the rocks.

TWO MASTERS.

Matt. vi. 24.

24. "None can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other: or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

THIS passage is closely connected with the Saviour's words about treasure. The conscience is the eye of the soul. The love of money is a film over the soul's eye. If you find the Saviour's words on this point dark, the fault lies in yourself. Hence the importance of getting *ourselves* right, when we look at a practical subject. This gives the connexion of verses 22 and 23, with the question of treasures on earth.

But there is another point of view in which the Saviour sets them. "How does treasure on earth affect the disciple, considered as a servant of God and Christ?"

The intention and great aim of your life is not only the eye by which you see everything, it is also your master. Jesus singles out two of the ordinary masters of life—God, and Mammon. By Mammon is meant wealth, as in Luke xvi. 9—13.

Our Lord thus draws out distinctly His meaning in speaking of the "single eye." He foresaw that many would say in their hearts—"There is truth in what Jesus says. Treasures on high are safest and best. But treasures below are good also in their way: I will try and win both. I will both serve God, and make money. 'Tis wisdom to make the best of both worlds.'

Jesus, foreseeing the favorable eye with which such a scheme would be viewed by His people, here proclaims the impossibility of its success. "None can serve two masters."

'But why? Cannot a man wait on two persons, however different their sentiments?'

If thus you argue, it is because your views of service are low and meagre indeed. Christ supposes, that in true service, the whole man is enlisted. He would not have a mere outward, formal, unwilling, grudging service. "If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him."

From this point view the Saviour's maxim, and it will appear quite reasonable and true. If both the masters were exactly of the same disposition and aims, the thing might be possible. But between God and Mammon lies the greatest opposition of character. Service to the one is a fraud on the other. Neither is content to take a part of the man. They are at enmity with each other. The wisdom of each is essentially at variance with that of the other. "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent:" 1 Cor. i. 19. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

Not only is neither master content with a portion of

the man; but such is man's nature, that he cannot render them such a divided service, even if he desires it. For man is made up of (1) understanding, and (2) affections. (2) In his affections then, either God or Mammon will have the preference. He will either prefer Mammon, and bristle in defence of earthly goods: or he will obey God, Who by His Son bids him put on meekness and non-resistance. He will either love Mammon, who bids him hold riches with a close gripe: or God, Who bids him sow liberally. If the one be loved, the opposite is hated.

(1) Moreover, the principles and plans of one, will more commend themselves to his understanding than those of the other; and will obtain a lasting lodgment there, to the ejection of the opposite.

He will either give himself up to the desire of heavenly treasure, and will take as his "security," God's word: or he will pursue earthly riches, and his place of safety will be below. As the one class of treasure approves itself to the mind, so will the other appear foolish and unreal. The man of sense looks with scorn upon wealth which cannot be seen and counted now. He speaks of "*realizing* a thousand pounds"—when it has been put into his hand, and is acknowledged at his banker's.

Opposite as are the aims of God and Mammon, so opposite are their respective means of success. God speaks to His children, and bids them "Give." He tells them it is the path of faith. He assures them, that the principal shall be forthcoming at the "resurrection of the just."

Mammon bids his servants 'Lay up. Get money. Get it at any rate. Compete! Crush your neighbour, if he stands in your way. See how highly the rich

are thought of! What smiles wait on the successful man! What a snug retreat you are making for yourself in your old age! With such pictures Mammon captivates his votaries.

Between two such masters, your heart and understanding must side with one or the other. And you are really the servant of that master, who holds your reason and affection.

Begin to serve Mammon, and he will absorb your heart, and become your god: Col. iii. 5; Eph. v. 5. In the race to be rich, no *heart* will be left for Christ. The Sunday thoughts of the man bent on wealth, run on bills and bargains, receipts and expences. The love of money is a dangerous, a growing passion. Other evil affections are frowned on in society. But most of Mammon's ways are respectable. Even when competition is destroying a neighbour, law cannot touch the injurer.

Christian! Are you attempting the impossibility here denounced by Jesus? If so, 'tis mere unbelief. You will form but another sad witness of the truth of the Lord's words. There was danger arising from wealth, even under law: Deut. vi. 10—12. Full often the heart stopped at the gift, and forgot the Giver. Now the danger is a hundredfold greater. Wealth was then the reward of the service of Jehovah. Now to seek it, is to run counter to the heavenly calling wherewith you are called. You go forth to the attempt without your armour. Your attempt is vain. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." You are attempting to obtain good ears from wheat, around which you are planting thorns and thistles. You may struggle for a time to unite the service of the two. But the clearer the views you have of the service of each, the more

incompatible will they appear. May the Lord lead you to pursue His service alone! "Fear not, little flock; for it was [Greek] your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also:" Luke xii. 32—34.

ANXIETY FORBID.

Matt. vi. 25—34.

25. "Wherefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your soul,* what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink; nor for your body, what ye shall put on."

THIS is a consequence from the principles previously laid down by the Saviour. 'Since you are not to engage in the service of Mammon, be not anxious for the necessaries of life.' For by means of this anxiety, many of the poor are kept toiling beyond their strength, and devoting to labour hours which are necessary for the service of God in prayer, the reading of His word, and meeting His people in their assemblies for worship.

Jesus is now especially addressing Himself to the poor disciple. He would be ready to say—'I give up all hope and desire for riches: but life has its *necessaries*, and with *us* the difficulty is to keep hunger at bay, and to find clothing and shelter.' These are the circumstances, to meet which, the Lord applies His heavenly wisdom.

Even here, Jesus forbids *anxiety*: not as some say,

* ψυχή.

'*excessive* anxiety,' for who thinks he is excessively anxious? Anxiety is forbidden altogether.

"Be not anxious for your soul, what ye shall eat."

The English reader will probably feel startled at this rendering, and be ready to deem it absurd. It is so on our present views of human nature, and the signification which we attach to the soul. We say, that man is 'made up of body and soul;' and by the soul we understand the spiritual and immortal part of man.

But this is not the philosophy of Scripture concerning human nature. That describes man as consisting of three parts—"body, *soul*, and *spirit*." May "your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the presence [Greek] of our Lord Jesus Christ:" 1 Thess. v. 23; Heb. iv. 12.

By the soul, the Scripture intends that portion of the man which animals possess in common with ourselves, and in which the animal passions dwell.

1. That animals have souls (though not spirits), take a proof or two. Our translators render the Hebrew by 'soul' when it refers to man; but by other words, when the reference is to the beasts. "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath a *soul*:" (marg.) Gen. i. 20, 21, 30; ix. 4, etc. "The third part of the creatures that were in the sea, and had *souls*, died:" Rev. viii. 9. "Every living *soul* died in the sea:" xvi. 3.

2. That the soul is the seat of the animal passions, and the connecting link between the body and the immortal spirit, take the following passages in proof.

(1) Of Shechem it is said, "His *soul* clave unto Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel:" Gen. xxxiv. 3.

(2) "My *soul*," says the Egyptian, "shall be satisfied upon them:" Ex. xv. 9.

(3) "Also, thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the *soul* of a stranger:" Ex. xxiii. 9.

(4) The hireling was to be paid before sunset, "for he is poor, and setteth his *soul* upon it:" Deut. xxxiv. 15.

(5) "The Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of *soul*:" Deut. xxviii. 65.

This list might be indefinitely prolonged: but these will suffice for this point.

The soul is especially spoken of in connexion with the animal desires of food and drink.

(1) "The *soul* that *eateth* of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings," etc.: Lev. vii. 20.

(2) The *soul* that *eateth* it [fat] shall be cut off from His people:" Lev. vii. 25, 27.

(3) "Ye shall not make your *souls* abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth:" Lev. xi. 43.

So also Num. xxi. 4; Deut. xii. 15, 20, 21; Isa. xxix. 8, etc.

Quite another word is used for 'life.' The soul is the principle which imparts life to the body. As soon as the soul and spirit, which are closely entwined (Heb. iv. 12), leave the body, death has taken place.

We are to be anxious then neither for food and drink, nor for clothing which encompasses the material frame.

"Is not the soul more than its food? * and the body than its clothing?" *

This is an argument from the greater to the less.

* 'Its' arises from the force of the article.

The soul is more valuable than the food : what supports the body is more important than its clothes. He, then, who gave the greater will not withhold the less. He who gives you a horse, will not be likely to grudge you a horse-cloth, or a bundle of hay.

26. "Look upon the birds of the heaven : for they sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them : are not ye far superior to them ?"

Man sows, reaps, collects the sheaves for his winter and spring supply. Does he feel anxious about food ? Let him notice the birds. They, too, have to pass through the inclement skies of winter, when the leaves and fruits have fallen or been swept off by man. They have no store to go to, as man has : no winter provision which they have made. Yet they are fed. In spite of frost, in spite of the snow covering up, at times, all view of the ground whence they derive their supplies, they are fed. How seldom do we find a single bird dead of starvation, even in a severe winter !

The Saviour, to scatter anxiety, brings in God. It is when we look only at man, and the things we can see, that doubts and cares enter. Our remedy comes from One Whom we cannot see. It lies in a confidence in His knowledge, power, goodness. Let us believe these, and our souls will be kept at peace. Observe how far our Lord is from that cold and faithless philosophy, which, deeming of God as we do of man, supposes that He does not stoop to regard such trifles as man's food and clothing ; but imagines, that having settled certain general laws for the direction of the worlds He has made, He allows them to take their course, regardless of any special cases of distress which they may occasion.

Not so the Son of God. He unfolds to us God, as caring for the need of the inferior creatures ; feeding day by day the birds. Now if He regard it not as beneath Him to minister provision to creatures so far below us in the scale of creation, how much more does He care for us men ? Still more will His heart be attentive to the necessities of those, towards whom He stands related as their "Father in heaven." This is clearly spoken of believers. It is to them that Jesus confines the Fatherhood of God. Notice this, reader ! In our day the strong, the increasing tendency in many, is to break down the distinction between the converted and unconverted, to deny the depravity introduced by the fall, to describe God as the Father alike of all, and Christ as related simply to the human family, leaving out of sight the elect of God. Be it our care then to maintain this most obvious and fundamental distinction !

God is Creator of the birds ; Creator also of fallen man, as He is of Satan likewise ; but He is the Heavenly Father of disciples only.

Jesus, too, identifies His Father with the Creator. This was a point of much importance in the controversies of the early Church : when philosophy endeavoured to sever between the Creator and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It will be as important again, and for the same reason.

Some misused this text in another way. They contended, that believers ought not to sow or reap, any more than the birds. But the Saviour is not forbidding work, but anxiety. He himself wrought at the carpenter's trade, till He went forth as the Teacher. Paul, His apostle, wrought as the tent-maker : and gave directions that the Thessalonian believers should

go on with their usual employments: 1 Thess. iv. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 7, 8, 12.

27. "But which of you, by anxiety, can add to his stature one cubit?"

A third argument against oppressing care, is added by our Lord. Anxiety is USELESS. It effects nothing in the business of life. Dismiss it then, as a burden without profit.

On this verse a controversy is raised, whether the Greek word which we translate 'stature,' refers to the man's height, or to the length of his life.

The word has both senses: but the context will enable us to decide in which sense it is to be taken here.

It means, then, certainly, "stature:" Luke ii. 52; xix. 3; Eph. iv. 13. Height of stature is an object of desire to many, specially those that are below the common height. It is, however, a trifle, as compared with necessary food. Human stature is measured by cubits. "There went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath of Gath, whose height was *six cubits* and a span:" 1 Sam. xviii. 4. "He slew an Egyptian, a man of great *stature, five cubits high*:" 1 Chron. xi. 23.

'Cubit' is a measure properly applied to length of superficies only. It is true, that in poetry the measure applicable to an extended surface, may be spoken of time, as when the Psalmist says, "Behold, Thou hast made my days an handbreadth:" Psa. xxxix. 5. But the Sermon on the Mount is not poetry. An unusual sense is then only allowable, when the usual signification cannot apply. Here it suits in every respect. It stands most appropriately midway between "food" and

"clothing," related to both. Stature depends mainly on food, and it sets its limits on the clothing required. Such as our stature is, such the quantity of clothing we need.

The height of our body is a point fixed by God. Its growth is something carried on without our care: and no anxiety will elevate us. Jesus supposes the desire to be to *add* to our height: for who but a giant would wish to be lower than he is?

28. "And why are ye anxious concerning clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, nor do they spin: 29. But I say unto you, That not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these."

Dress is a lower want than food. But for this also, God takes care. This He bestows upon parts of creation still inferior to the birds. With regard to this also, Jesus forbids anxiety.

Our Lord had an eye to the beauties of nature. But they spoke to Him of God, and of His Father's perfections. No doubt He pointed to the flowers then upspringing at their feet.

What special flower is intended? There are certain conditions by which our choice must be decided. (1) It must be a wild flower, (2) growing in Galilee, and (3) plentiful. These conditions then exclude the white lily, on which some have fixed. It has not been found wild in Palestine. It may allude to the tulip, which grows plentifully in Galilee in early spring; or to the crown-imperial, a tall, showy, yellow flower; or to the martagon-lily, which is a conspicuous flower, of a brilliant red, blooming in that climate in April and May. This last is probably the one intended.

In calling our attention to the lilies, a different word is used from that which pointed out the birds to our

notice. And the reason is clear. The wild birds flit away from us in fear, and it is but a passing glimpse or two that we can obtain. But the flowers are stationary, and we may observe them as often as we will, and note their beautiful enclosure within defending leaves, till the blossom is free to expand itself to the warm sun and genial air.

Provision for dress is made *for* these, not *by* them. The man takes his part in procuring clothing; he collects the cotton, or the hair, or the wool which the female of those countries spins, and cuts and sews into a garment. But these do nought of all this.

Yet are they magnificently furnished with apparel. A king's robes are the most splendid raiment that art can produce. And Solomon was the richest and most costly of kings. Sheba, herself a queen, was overpowered with the view of his magnificence. But the lily surpasses the robes of Solomon. Its colour is more vivid, its texture is more artificial, more exquisitely finished. Jesus bade His disciples take His word for it then. As Christ was the Creator, the inferiority of human art to His surpassing loom was known to Him. But the microscope, which the Creator has permitted man to invent, proves it to our eye. We are able to look upon flowers, as if we had an eye a thousand times greater than we possess. And we find that God has finished and polished His work with art immeasurably above man's. The finest product of man's loom, magnified to the extent to which it is possible, appears coarse and clumsy to a degree. Had we Solomon's robe and the lily side by side beneath the lenses of science, none could doubt a moment the accuracy of our Lord's words.

Be not studious of dress, Christian! The clothing

that becomes the believer, whether male or female, is that of good works. Our ornaments, our glory, our true apparel shall be given us in the kingdom and the city to come.

30. "If therefore God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is being cast into the oven, how much more shall He clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

After calling our attention to the beauty of the wild flowers, the Saviour bids us notice also how brief their life, at how low a rate they are regarded. Their life is of itself, short, even when allowed to run out its course unchecked; but man steps in to make it still briefer. In the East, where they use no coal, have but little wood, and do not make hay, they cut down the grass as fuel for the oven. Their ovens, indeed, are very different from ours; being in many cases only an earthen pan, larger at the bottom than at the top, around the outside of which the hot ashes are heaped, and the dough spread in thin leaves over the inner surface, where they are quickly baked.

How far superior is man, and above all, renewed man, in dignity above the flower of the field; as possessed of reason, made in God's image, capable of rendering worship to the Most High, made one with the Son of God! If then God estimates things at their real value, of far greater importance in His sight must man be, than the flower! If then He thus clothe the grass of the field, much more will He give to you, His sons, the clothing necessary! You are not yet come to your glory; you are sovereigns travelling incognito.

The great facts on which the Saviour bases His appeal had from the beginning been laid open to the eye of the common observation of mankind. But who, before

Himself, ever saw their moral meaning, or drew these lessons of comfort? This is the Saviour's glory then. As it was Newton's glory, that out of the apple's fall, he drew the system of the universe, detecting principles wrapped up in so well known a fact: so is it to the honour of our Lord in a higher degree, that He has discovered to us the far greater principles of Divine Providence—far more nearly concerning the welfare, temporal and eternal, of man.

That the Sermon on the Mount is really addressed to believers, is most decisively proved by the closing words of this verse! "O ye of little *faith*." Is not faith the great distinction between the world and the disciple? "He that *believeth* and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that *believeth not*, shall be damned." Then to disciples, as men of faith, and not to the unbelieving multitude, these words are addressed. The three other occasions on which the phrase is used, all refer to disciples: Matt. viii. 26; xiv. 31; xvi. 8; Luke xii. 28.

31. "Be not anxious therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?"
32. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

For the second time, anxiety, about even the necessities of life, is forbid. And two new reasons are assigned against it. Jesus leaves the arguments drawn from the creation, and presents one derived from the position of the disciples with regard to the men of the world. They were to be lights of the world; therefore their spiritual attitude was to be superior to that of the men of the world.

They were therefore not to be anxious: because

anxiety was a mark of the ignorance and unbelief of the heathen. It arose from their low position.
1. Human nature is at rest, only so long as it can see stores of food and clothing; or the money which can procure them. 2. The world and its good things are the portion of the Gentile. He knows not anything beyond the horizon of life: no wonder then that his soul is taken up with seeking these things! 3. He is ignorant of any one who should provide for him. His own strength and forecast are to supply his need.

But you disciples, are to take a far higher stand.
1. Your portion is not here below: you are passengers through a world of trial, to the kingdom and glory of God. 2. The flesh is in you to be subdued to the spirit. 3. You know Him Who can provide for you, when your wisdom fails, and you cannot lift your arm. While these cares are the natural result of unbelief, and of ignorance of the God of grace, you, knowing Him, are to rise above them,

The Saviour does not, you observe, speak of the *Jew* as occupying this position of anxiety. For the support of the Israelite was rested on very different ground.

1. He knew the Creator and Preserver of all, as Jehovah *his* God. That God gave to his sires and himself a goodly, fertile land. He promised, that if obedient, that land should yield a full supply, not only sufficient to support his wants, but to enrich him: Lev. xxvi. 3—5; Deut. xi. 13.

He was indeed taught to trust God one year in seven. The seventh year the fields, the vineyards, and oliveyards were to lie fallow and undressed: the poor of the land, and the beasts of the field were to enjoy them: Ex. xxiii. 10.

But how were they then to be supplied? By super-

natural blessing on the crop of the sixth year. It would produce sufficient for three years: it would supply them with the sixth year, the seventh year, and the eighth year, till its harvest was gathered in: Lev. xxv. 18—22.

But Jesus rests disciples' confidence of support not on any such special promises, such supernatural or miraculous providence, but on the ordinary providence of God, as seen in His support of the lilies and the birds. Nor shall we be supplied on the ground of our obedience, but as the consequence of our sonship, already received by faith in Christ: John i. 11, 12.

The second argument is based upon our heavenly Father's knowledge of our need. This is a trust-worthy ground in relation even to an earthly father. Selfish as is fallen human nature, yet, with exception of only the most brutal and degraded of men, the fathers of earth, aware of their children's necessities, toil daily to supply them with food and clothes. If they then provide for their children, how much more shall your 'heavenly Father,' the only good, or bountiful, supply your wants! Thus, Jesus, by dropping the word 'God,' and using a description of Him instead, most forcibly strengthens our confidence.

Observe again, how He confines the Fatherhood of God. He does not say (what would have been most natural, had the sentiment been true), "For after these things do the Gentiles seek, for *their* heavenly Father knoweth," etc. No! the Fatherhood of God is a doctrine first clearly introduced by Jesus; and by Him made to encompass, not Israel, not all men; but the elect and regenerate only. These alone are born of God; begotten from above.

Amidst the various difficulties then of each successive

year, the severity of the cold, the depression of trade, or any other source of disquiet, look, poor disciple, above the circumstances of earth, to the Master of them on high. He is your Father, and is aware of the needs of that body He has given you. Plead then your necessities before Him with confidence. Trust the God of goodness and of power, reconciled to you by Jesus Christ; yea, the God Who has adopted you among His children, and enrolled you in the book of life.

33. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and these things shall all be added to you."

It is not enough to teach us what we are not to seek. Man must have some positive object engaging his attention and pursuit.

Jesus therefore informs us what we are to desire, and principally to seek.

1. It is to be the "kingdom of God." Does not this show us, that it cannot mean 'the Gospel dispensation?' That is already present, and requires no seeking. Must it not be rather something yet future? Yes! 'tis the kingdom of glory, the millennial reign of Christ, as we have before seen. This is confirmed by Heb. iv. 11, when, after describing that happy time, as the sabbath-rest that remains for the people of God, Paul adds, "Let us *labour* therefore to enter into that rest, lest any fall after the same example of disobedience" (Greek). See also Rom. ii. 7; Luke xii. 31—47. Nor does it mean—'Enter the Church.' That has already been taught; and is something which is soon fulfilled.

2. What is the "righteousness of God" which we are to seek? (1) It is not *the imputed*

righteousness of Christ. The obedient believer, as his *first steps*, has entered the assembly of the Lord's people, after gladly accepting the righteousness of faith, and being justified thereby.

(2) By it, the *practical, difficult lessons of holiness*, taught in this Sermon, are intended. Here is something which may well exercise us all the time of our life. The perfection which belongs to our Father on high, is not attained in a day. This is a righteousness beyond that of Scribe or Pharisee: and needful for him who would enter the millennial reign.

Righteousness is used in the active sense, in Matt. iii. 15; Acts x. 35; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 22; Heb. xi. 33.

"The kingdom of God" is the *end* to be sought. The "righteousness of God" is the *way* to obtain it. Those not doers of this righteousness are to be excluded: Matt. vii. 21. This is one of the very few instances in Matthew, where the expression the "kingdom of God" is used instead of "the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus, having secured the first place in our affections and conduct for the chief thing, promises, that all secondary matters relating to this present life shall be taken into account, and given over to us. We are to steer by a star which lies far beyond our present horizon. We are then only occupying our true place, and giving present things their rightful place in the scale, when we see this life as a pilgrimage to the true life, which lies beyond it.

There is a remarkable saying attributed to our Lord by one of the early writers, which may very likely have been spoken by Him. At all events, it is quite in harmony with the word before us. "Ask for the *great* things, and the *small* shall be added to you: and

ask for the *heavenly* things, and the *earthly* shall be added to you." We have a well-known instance in which this occurred. "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God. . . . Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this Thy people: for who can judge this Thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life: but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My people, over whom I have made thee king: *Wisdom* and *knowledge* are granted unto thee, and I will give thee *riches*, and *wealth*, and *honour*, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall any after thee have the like:" 2 Chron. i. 7—11.

34. "Be not anxious therefore for the morrow; for the morrow shall be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Here is another argument against anxiety, drawn from a view of our best interests. Here is a third prohibition, so strong is our leaning in this direction. Every day has its own burthen of duty, of toil, of endurance, quite sufficient for it. But he who is anxious about to-morrow, adds to to-day's care a burthen not properly belonging thereto. He borrows a load, and lays it on the back of to-day. This is folly. God gives daily grace, for daily need. But He does not give grace to bear the burthens which we unnecessarily take upon ourselves.

We are not then to be anxious about the future: not

even a period so close to us as to-morrow. Much less then for years to come.

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” The trials of each day seem to be called their “evil,” because they spring from sin. While God overrules them for His people’s good, they are, in their own nature, suffering, and are part of the punishment of transgression.

Learn this, Christian! For His glory, and for your good, your heavenly Father bids you lay down the load of anxiety. Trust His hand! He has led thousands unnumbered already safely through life. He can, He will, lead you. All things are already working together for good for you. Leave the helm in the hands of the captain. Do you go about the task set you down in the hold. He will steer aright. Have you not often troubled yourself with fears about the future, till your heart has sunk within you at visions of difficulties which you never *could* encounter? But when the time drew on, your imaginary difficulties melted. Things took a turn you did not foresee, and your fears had worried you in vain. These ghosts which frightened you so in the dark, fled when the daylight of the present was shed over your path. Learn then not to disquiet yourself about the future: not to be looking out over the waters for some white-crested and threatening wave, which will surely sweep over your decks, if it do not drown your bark.

The billow may sink, long ere you come up to it; or you may just escape its violence, by a new tack. Look onward to the white cliffs of the haven for which you are steering! Shape your course thither, and God your Father will care for the rest!

On one occasion, in a heavy storm at sea, the

passengers were much affrighted at the prospect of being wrecked. A child, the son of the owner of the vessel, was the only one who retained his self-possession. One inquired of him, how he could be so peaceful, when the waves were so threatening, and death stared them in the face? He replied, ‘*Father’s* at the helm!’

This soothing principle of confidence may be ours also. *That* father, while he might do all that seamanship could devise, might yet lose the bark and all its crew, himself also being swallowed up in the depths. But ’tis not so with our Father in heaven. The sea is His, the stormy gusts are under His control. He can in a moment beckon them into silence. He can in a moment bring us into the calm haven where we would be.

To what extent may we calculate upon God’s sending us supplies? Shall we say, that a believer never can want a meal?

I think not. Jesus Himself was at times hungry; once fasted forty days. His servant Paul was “in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, *in hunger and thirst*, in *fastings* often, in cold and nakedness:” 2 Cor. xi. 27; vi. 5. It is said of the Great Multitude of the ransomed in the temple above—“They shall *hunger* no more, nor *thirst* any more,” as if previously they had known both. But we may confidently say, that God will preserve His people from starvation and nakedness.

What is the reason why (as I believe) many Christians are kept so very poor?

1. I suppose it is, because many use *wrong* means to get themselves out of the trial. They borrow, and make great promises how readily they will pay,

which they never fulfil; or never fulfil at the time and rate of their promise. Do not wonder, Christian, if you do so, that God *keeps* you poor. 'Tis a just punishment of your *sin*.

2. I suppose, too, that many do not use the *right* means. When the trial is on you, reader, instead of closing your door, and in solemn earnestness telling your tale of need before your heavenly Father, do not you look to *man*, and overlook *God*? As the consequence, you experience many a trying rebuff, and return perhaps as empty-handed as you went; whereas a visit to God would have relieved your heart of its burthen, and given you unlooked-for supplies.

3. There is another reason for the close and constant pressure of poverty on some Christians. Do you not *mis-spend* your money? Is it not all laid out on *yourself*? You do not *give* to others, or to Christ's cause.

Now, if this be the case, Christian, your poverty is of your own choice. What says God? "There is that *scattereth* and yet *increaseth*, there is that *withholdeth* more than is meet, but it *tendeth to poverty*:" Prov. xi. 24. Your poverty then is that very tendency of things of which God forewarned you. You wish to increase what you have; but you are taking the very steps, as the Most High assures you, which are the way to grow *poor*. If you would have a crop, you must not eat up all your corn. You must scatter some of it over the field. No harvest without a sowing!

But if you think to justify yourself by the thought, 'But I am so poor, it cannot apply to me. I cannot be expected to give to others.' Not at all times, perhaps. But there are times, doubtless, when you are able: when you have something more than you need for yourself. Give *then*!

(1) If you wish to rise out of your poverty, that is God's way. (2) If you wish to grow thankful, that is God's way. When we see that there are others more needy than ourselves, it is a great help towards being thankful. (3) Aye, and it is our heavenly Father's design to lift us up above our natural selfishness. Would not that be a blessing, greater than any amount of gold, to be growing like our Father, and His Son Jesus Christ?

There is a lesson to all in that word, "Seek ye *FIRST* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Whatever you lose, try and make sure of that. If a ship is about to be wrecked, the passengers run to their boxes to make that safe first which they value most. If a house is on fire, the father seeks first to get his children safely out of the flames.

Seek first then the kingdom! If that be gained, all losses will be repaid. Lose that, and all other gains are loss. As Carson nobly said: "I have lost this world: let me not lose that which is to come!"

JUDGING FORBID.

Matt. vii. 1—5.

1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you."

THE present subject is one of considerable difficulty: it is one on which much misapprehension is entertained; one on which the infidel can, with much plausibility, bring the charge of contradiction against the Scriptures. It is also a practical subject, of frequent occurrence. It is therefore of the highest utility to have clear and true views concerning it.

In what sense then are we forbidden to judge?

There are two great classes of judgment, into which it will be well at once, for distinctness sake, to divide the subject. There is (1) PRIVATE judgment: and (2) PUBLIC and OFFICIAL judgment.

1. Is it then PRIVATE judgment which is forbid?

(1) Is it meant, that we are not to *form an opinion about persons and things*? May we never frame to ourselves a judgment whether our neighbour is a converted man or not? Is *that* what is forbid?

Certainly not! How can we love any as a Christian brother, as Christ commands us to do, unless we esteem

him to be one? 1 John iv. 7; John xiii. 35. Towards the world, we are to entertain one feeling; towards our brethren in Christ, another. Then we must form our opinion of individuals, separating mankind into those outside the Church, and those within it. The Lord Jesus, but a few verses onward, requires it. He teaches us to act in a certain way towards dogs and swine. But, in order to fulfil this, we must decide in our minds, who are sheep on the one hand, who are dogs and swine on the other. A little further on, Jesus bids His disciples beware of false prophets, and try them by their fruits: ver. 15—20. We are, therefore, not only not *forbid* to form our opinion of men's spiritual state, but we are taught to do it. Here is *the duty of private judgment*, which Rome denies. See also John vii. 24.

(2) Again, testing the sense of our Lord's words by the latter portion of the sentence, we come to the same conclusion. 'Judge not, *that ye be not judged*.' If we do not *form an opinion* about others' spiritual actions and state, will God *abstain from forming an opinion of our spiritual state*? By no means. Or even if He does, will it be any harm to us, that God should frame to Himself an exact and true picture of our state? No! Then that is not the meaning of the text.

(3) But if we are not forbid to form a true opinion about others, are we forbid to *give expression to it*? In some cases it is lawful: Acts xv. 19, 24. If we have found that a man is a swine, or a false prophet, shall we be doing amiss in warning our brother against him? We shall find the Saviour and His apostles speaking out with great clearness on the spiritual state of many. "Thou hypocrite!" says Jesus, a verse or two further on.

"I, brethren, could not speak unto you *as unto spiritual*, but as *unto carnal*, even as unto babes in Christ:" 1 Cor. iii. 1. Again and again the apostle speaks in condemnation of the sins, both of believers and of unbelievers: 1 Cor. v.

Again, if we do not speak in condemnation of other men's sins, will God not speak against ours? He will. That then is not the sense of the warning which our Lord gives us here.

2. We come then to the PUBLIC, official sense. *This is what is forbid.* A CHRISTIAN MAY NOT BE A MAGISTRATE.

That this is the meaning, may easily be established.

1. Our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, is comparing His teaching with the law of Moses. What then is the sense of judging under the law?

The first occurrence of the word 'judge' is characteristic. "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to *judge* the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I *judge* between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God and His laws. . . . Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them *judge the people* at all seasons: and it shall be, that

every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall *judge*: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. . . . And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they *judged* the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they *judged* themselves:" Ex. xviii. 13—16, 21, 22, 25, 26.

This institution was to be continued after they had entered the land of promise. "*Judges* and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall *judge* the people with *just judgment*. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee:" Deut. xvi. 18—20.

Their rule was *strict justice*. "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and *judge righteously* between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall

hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it:" Deut. i. 13—17. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but *in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour*:" Lev. xix. 15.

They were to *pass sentence*, and see to its execution. "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose. And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee *the sentence of judgment*: and thou shalt *do according to the sentence*, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall shew thee: and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously:" Deut. xvii. 8—13. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the

wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that *the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face*, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee:" Deut. xxv. 1—3.

They were raised up to restrain iniquity by fear, and by the endurance of punishment.

It is in this civil and official sense, that the word has been already used in this Sermon, and in this Gospel. "If any man wishes to go to law with thee" (*σοι κριθηναι*): v. 40; xix. 28.

"Then said Pilate to them, Take ye Him, and *judge Him according to your law*. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to *put any man to death*:" John xviii. 31. "Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou *to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?*" Acts xxiii. 3; xxiv. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 1, 6.

2. This is confirmed by other parts of the Sermon. *The conduct here taught, is also a feature of two of the beatitudes.*

"Blessed are the *meek*." "Blessed are the *merciful*: for they shall obtain mercy." In this latter sentence both parts agree with the verse now being expounded. In the close of the fifth chapter, Jesus required His disciples not to have recourse to law and justice, when suffering under injury: ver. 38—48. Here He takes up the other side of the world's political institutions, and forbids to His disciples the holding of civil power, and the carrying out of law as a magistrate, and avenger. For these two must needs go together as agreeing parts

of one whole. Moses, admitting one, admitted both. Jesus refuses both. So does Paul. The Christian's going to law is forbidden by him: 1 Cor. vi. He warns him also against taking judicial power: 1 Cor. iv.

3. Again, this is the sense *in which the second part of the sentence applies with greatest force.* "Judge not, that ye be not judged." The judgment of God is judicial. It will take place when we are set before His bar, and sentence is passed. Here then the parallel is complete. Do not you enact the magistrate, and pass sentence on offenders: for you, too, have to be set before the bar of God.

4. This is manifestly *the sense of the parallel place in Luke.* "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again:" Luke vi. 37, 38.

5. It is the sense *in which our Lord refused to judge.* While He condemned sin as a teacher, He would not condemn as the public judge. "For," saith He, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world:" John xii. 47. He was tried twice upon this point, and each time He pointedly declined to act. (1) The Scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in adultery. "Now Moses in the law commanded, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" John viii. 5. The Saviour did not unsay the sentence of Moses, but brought in the principle of the text to bear upon the conscience even of the unconverted.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her." This new principle wrought so secretly, but powerfully, that the accusers left. "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath none condemned thee? She said, 'No man, Lord.' And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." In one sense Jesus *did* condemn her. He called her act 'sin.' But He did not condemn her judicially, or as a magistrate. That then is the sense, of which we are in quest.

(2) Again, on a certain occasion, "One of the company said unto Him, 'Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' And He said unto him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?'" Luke xii. 13, 14. Jesus therefore declared Himself not commissioned to act as a ruler or magistrate, and so refused to interfere in the case. This is the sense then in which His disciples are to imitate Him. They are not to wield civil power, or judge as the magistrate.

6. That this is the true meaning of the command, will appear from the fact, that *Paul rebukes the believers at Corinth for acting as civil rulers.* "Already ye have been filled, already ye have grown rich,* *ye reigned as kings without us*, and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." Paul then proceeds to show how different was his own position as the servant of Christ. "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ. We are weak, but ye are strong: ye are honourable, but we are despised." "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons, I warn you:" 1 Cor. iv. 8.

Now if this be so, if the acting as a magistrate be

* See Greek.

forbid, is it not sad that commentators should contradict their Lord? Here are specimens.

(1) "*Christ does not condemn judging as a magistrate, for that, when according to justice, is lawful and necessary.*" Nay, but while judgment from the bench is necessary to *the world*, the question is, is it necessary to be wielded by *the disciple*? It is just because the principle of the magistrates' bench is *justice*, that the Christian is forbidden to meddle with it. It is because, as a sinner, he cannot stand before God's bar when weighed in the balances of justice, that he is not to touch that two-edged sword. If it have one edge toward the offender, it bears with the other against himself.

(2) "That here the Saviour treats not of public judgments, whether civil or ecclesiastical, nor of private judgments legitimately formed according to the calling of each, but of adverse and malignant censures of things or of persons, is beyond controversy, except among people of an obstinate spirit."

(3) "Our Saviour must not be understood here as prohibiting any judgment, which is elsewhere in Holy Writ allowed; for the Holy Spirit doth not command and prohibit the same thing: whence it is evident, that it is not to be understood of political or ecclesiastical judgment: nor was our Saviour here speaking to any such persons."

In answer I ask, Can any one act as the magistrate, and not judge criminals? and not pass sentence according to the rule of justice? And is not this the sense in which God is hereafter to judge? and in which we may well fear to meet Him? If so, that is the sense of the Saviour's words.

But did not our Lord and His apostles approve the

judging of magistrates? Does not Paul declare that all civil powers are appointed by God? True; he does. He declares them avengers of evil. But He bids the Christian not to use vengeance. That belongs not to him, but to God. It is clear, therefore, that the sphere of the magistrate is one—that of the Christian, another.

(4) "This is one of those paradoxes of the Christian religion," says another, "which the enemies of the faith are accustomed to lay hold of as a ground of reproach, as if Jesus took away all manner of judgments, and introduced a savage anarchy. The Anabaptists also under this pretext, disapprove the judgments of the magistrate, and refuse (to exercise magistracy). But both these parties are widely astray from the mind of the Lord. For how should the Lord disapprove judgments which both Himself and His apostles in other passages approved? and without which neither the Church nor *human society* could stand? For unless magistrates were at times to judge criminals, the Church scandalous livers, masters their servants, mistresses their maids, parents their children—license, and the power to sin without punishment, would soon bring everything to ruin."

The good man here masses together things of a very different kind. (1) The control exercised in private by a master over servants, and by parents over children, is something very different in principle from the public acts of a magistrate over criminals. (2) Again, the discipline which believers exercise over their brethren in the Church when guilty of offences, is very different from that of the magistrate. The Church has no prisons, no gibbets. It does not touch those things which the civil law protects. Its utmost penalty is to

remove a man out of its pale, into the world. It does judge indeed. "Do not ye *judge* them that are within!" But it does not act the magistrate. All that it does, is done not in justice, but in mercy, with a design for the offender's good, "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The Church is the permitted scene of judgment; for its members are "the just." The world is not to be judged: nor are the Lord's people to take its power. If the world were to be judged, the ungodly would be destroyed. God is not now judging the world, nor imputing to it its trespasses. He will one day do so. He will arise to judge. And then believers also will judge the world and angels: 1 Cor. vi.

Even the world seems to feel an unseemliness and some sort of inconsistency, when clergymen sit on the bench of magistrates. They seem to own, that there is something unfit in *his* passing the sentence of justice on the offender from whose lips should proceed glad tidings of great joy to the sinner. But that which the world would confine to the *clergyman*, the enlightened believer sees to be nothing but the true standing of every renewed man in Christ Jesus. For every believer is God's priest, and witness of the glad tidings of peace by the blood of the cross.

2. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged with; and what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you."

In these words it is assumed, that every disciple shall be judged. And this is asserted in several other places. It is affirmed of mankind in general, in several passages. But, lest it should be thought, that the believer, since he is not of the world, is excepted; it

is stated to him and of him. "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people:" Heb. x. 30. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge:" Heb. xiii. 4. Lest it should be thought, too, that we shall account only for our *good* works, our evil ones being removed out of sight by Christ, it also is declared, that both classes of actions will be recompensed. The requital will be "according to works:" Rom. xiv. 10—12; 2 Cor. v. 8—10; Rev. ii. 23.

And *that* recompence has reference to the time of the kingdom. For, that judgment will take place before the kingdom. Shall we enter that joy, or be excluded? It depends partly on our choice of the principle that shall guide us.

Jesus bids us carry out the principle of mercy, both negatively and positively. In Luke especially, where the principle is more fully drawn out, the Saviour teaches us in effect—(1) 'Do *not* use justice as your rule. (2) *Do* use mercy. It will bring in blest results, both now with men, and hereafter from God.'

We are then here permitted to make our choice of the principle on which we will live.

We may make (1) JUSTICE our polar star, and steer by it through life. This will bring us several present advantages: defending our property, character, rights, perhaps elevating us to power and authority among men.

But the Saviour bids us look to the result of such a course after life is finished, or when we appear before Him. If justice has been the measure with which we measure to others, with the same will it be measured

to us. Christ will make our chosen principle take its turn upon ourselves. Our offences against Himself, since we became His servants, will be recompensed with justice. How then can we stand? How can we receive any reward? How be permitted to enter the kingdom? This has its chief force, when a believer receives magisterial power. Then, we may see from the law of Moses what is implied. He must take *justice as his rule of action*. He is to *resist* evil, to *avenge* it, to terrify transgressors from crime, by their feeling the penalty themselves, or by seeing it inflicted on others. He is to *pass sentence*, and in his power are stripes, the prison, and at the highest point, *death*. Now what says James of this? "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that sheweth no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment:*" James ii. 12, 13.

(2) Or you may take MERCY as your rule; and it will bring with it present trials. But if you look forward to the judgment of Christ as the testing time, then it will be heavenly prudence. "Judge not, *that ye be not judged.*" "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And Luke goes further, and gives a gracious *promise* from the Saviour's lips. "Judge not, and *ye shall not be judged*: condemn not, and *ye shall not be condemned.*"

'But have you not proved already, that all, even all believers, shall be judged? How then can it be true that they, if followers of mercy, shall *not* be judged? Can any, by any scheme, escape the judgment bar of Christ?'

No! But they can pass an examination before the Lord Jesus, upon the footing of mercy, and because of

its results, blessed and joyous, the Saviour here proposes it for our acceptance.

And, as by judging is constantly understood our being examined and recompensed according to the principle of justice, it may be said, that we shall not be judged.

3. But some think, that there is a path midway between these two principles, and that a magistrate may 'temper justice with mercy,' as it is sometimes said. Now that cannot be done with God's allowance. FIVE TIMES OVER HE FORBIDS MERCY AND PITY TO THE JUDGE AND WARRIOR: IN SHORT, TO THE MAN OF LAW IN GENERAL. "But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. *Thine eye shall not pity him*, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it. One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false

witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother ; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother : so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And *thine eye shall not pity ;* but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot :” Deut. xix. 11—21. Also Deut. vii. 16 ; xiii. 8 ; xxv. 12. And this is the general description of Moses’ law. “ He that despised Moses’ law died *without mercy* under two or three witnesses :” Heb. x. 28.

Behold then a manifest difference between the Law and the Gospel : a difference so sharp, that it amounts to positive contrariety. The man of law was to follow justice wholly. Pity was forbid. The disciple of the gospel is to relinquish law, and to show mercy. The compassion already shown by God to the believer, makes it improper in the highest degree that he should exact justice of his fellow. “ O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me : shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses :” Matt. xviii. 32—35. And again, “ Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, *bowels of mercies*, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering ; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye :” Col. iii. 12, 13.

REPROOF OF A BROTHER.

Matt. vii. 3—5.

3. “ Now why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but regardest not the beam in thine own eye ? 4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, ‘ Let me cast out the mote from thine eye,’ and behold the beam is in thine own eye ! 5. Hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

THE general truth, which lies upon the surface of this paragraph is, that the reformer of his brethren should not be guilty of the fault he reprehends, or of one still greater. He who prosecutes for bribery, should come into court with clean hands.

The Saviour notices first the *observation* of a fault. He inquires, how it is that we see the small defects of our brethren so readily, and turn our attention to them so strongly ? We ‘ behold,’ we gaze at the mote, by a voluntary attention directed to it. But the same party may overlook a much greater fault, or even a greater degree of the same fault, in himself. His brother’s fault is the chip, his is the weighty beam of a house. How can he see the minute object, with the huge one blocking up his own eye ? It needs no curious gaze to

discover his own fault. How can he overlook what is near? and fix his eyes on the distant?

How? Through self-love!

We make excuses for ourselves, and accept them, where we should despise them, if offered by another. "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity is found out to be hateful." This is the natural effect of inordinate self-love.

But thus it should not be. The Saviour cautions us against this manifest inconsistency.

4. "Or how wilt thou say to thy brother?—'Let me cast out the mote from thine eye.'"

Jesus is speaking of believers correcting, not the worldly, but their fellow-believers. "How wilt thou say to *thy brother*?" The brotherhood which is supposed throughout the Sermon, is not that of nature, but of grace: Matt. v. 22, 24, 47.

But it applies still more strongly to the case of a Christian acting as magistrate. There is one that confesses himself guilty of sin before God. But he is sentencing his fellow for offences against man. He owes, as he confesses, or he has been forgiven, ten thousand talents. But he passes sentence against one who owes an hundred pence. Can he condemn the culprit before men, while himself is a sinner before God? Might not the offender very strongly put to him his inconsistency?—"Sir, you are a Christian. You acknowledge yourself to need mercy before God. With what face can you draw on me the sword of justice, when, if God take it to you, it would pierce yourself? Show then, to me, the mercy you need yourself!" How poor and unsatisfactory would be felt to be the answer?—"I am sorry I cannot do so:

I sit here not to dispense mercy, but to exercise justice."

"How wilt thou say?"

Next to observation of the fault, comes the reproof, or the attempt to remove it. Observation loads the gun; reproof fires it. Jesus asks *how* a Christian can do so.

How can he muster courage, or rather hardihood, for the onset? How is it, that a feeling of inconsistency does not keep him silent? Is he not justly afraid of the retort of his brother whom he has reprov'd? Righteousness must sweep round the whole circle. If the brother with the mote-bearing eye be worthy of ten stripes for his mote: then you, the reprover, are deserving of a hundred for the beam which you carry! If you can see so clearly your brother's small fault, be assured he can see your far larger one! If you dare reprove him, he will know how to silence you. This lesson, therefore, appears to be a special deduction from the general principle, "With the same measure that ye measure, it shall be measured to you."

The history of the bar records the case of a thief bringing an action against his fellow accomplice in the theft, because he did not divide the spoil as agreed. After then that the court had righted the injury between them, and had passed sentence against the dishonest highwayman, it ought to lay hold of the plaintiff, and imprison both, and punish both. A court of *justice* must make its principle take effect everywhere. I have read of an officer, in the Peninsular war, who detected his men plundering in a flour-mill. He called them out, and threw a handful of flour on each of them as they passed him, to mark the offenders. He then mustered the regiment, in order that his

sentence might have the effect of deterring others. But when the soldiers stood before him, he observed that the men could scarcely keep their countenances at his reproof. He grew angry, till one of his brother officers, no longer able to endure the scene, informed him of the cause of the laughter! The heads of a stolen cock and hen were peering forth from his own coat-pockets. You may easily imagine how quickly his battery of reproof was silenced. The world has a strong proverb, on the unseemliness of Satan reproving sin. And it can teach us, that, for their own interests' sake, 'Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.' But Jesus' word is something far more profound.

The reproof is connected with the praiseworthy desire to get rid of the defect. You offer your services to your brother, to enable him to do so. But why have you not sought to free yourself from your far greater incumbrance?

5. "Thou hypocrite!"

A hypocrite is one whose principles and pretensions stand higher than his practice. The accurate observer supposed, wishes to remove what is evil, and to free his brother from what injures and degrades him. He desires the cause of Christ to stand free from whatever clogs its advance. The principle is a good one. The profession is right. But the practice halts! Prove the reality of your desire first, by its action on yourself. If the chip on the rail stop the train's progress, how much more the beam across it!

"Thou hypocrite!" The Great Judge Himself takes up the matter, and reproves the reprovor, with a heavy

word indeed. Let us take heed, that it be not said of us, at the Great Day!

5. "Cast out first the mote out of thine eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Our Lord does not mean that a believer is never to rebuke his fellow-Christian, never to warn, nor to seek to amend him, when he sees him going astray. The contrary is taught us. Those who rule in the Church, are commanded to do so: 1 Tim. v. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 12; Titus ii. 15; 1 Thess. v. 12. Christians (even though not Church officers) are instructed to do the same: Rom. xv. 14; 1 Thess. v. 14; Col. iii. 16; 2 Thess. iii. 15.

Jesus only bids you first see that you are not both guilty of the fault you wish to amend, and allowing it in yourself. Remove from yourself the offence you strive to abolish, and your words will come with weight. A sense of the difficulty of the conquest, and of your own past failures, will make you speak, not proudly, roughly, magisterially, but humbly, sincerely, lovingly. A reclaimed drunkard may with great fitness and power, plead with one still locked in that iron cage. Mr. Gough can speak with force and fervency and pathos, to warn and to save from the deep waters in which once he struggled. But the policeman must not be handcuffing the pickpocket for stealing a handkerchief, with a stolen purse in his own waistcoat!

Hence it is arranged of God, that His people are not to rule and judge the world, till they have appeared before Christ, and all has been settled with Him. They are not to reign, till sin is removed from them.

TREATMENT OF THE DOG AND SWINE.

Matt. vii. 6.

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine: lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.”

JESUS had first spoken of judgment, as it was *not* to be exercised by His people: or the rule of the civil magistrate. He then shows the condition under which we *are* to exercise spiritual judgment, and should seek to amend our *brethren*.

But there was an error which His wisdom foresaw, and provided against by the present warning. We may go to the opposite extreme. We may say,—‘We Christians are to be full of mercy, we are not to be keen observers of others’ faults, and blind to our own. Judgment of others does not become us.’ Does it not therefore, follow, that we are not to make invidious distinctions between man and man, arising from our ideas about their spiritual condition? May we say of this man?—‘He is a converted person.’ And of that?—‘He is dead in sins.’ Or, if we grant that apostles and Christians of old time did thus distinguish, when no *nation* had received the gospel, is it lawful to do thus, now that our own land and others are become

Christian? Should we not rightly regard every man as a believer and a son of God, who does not openly profess himself an infidel? Or if we grant, that every renewed man must perceive a difference between the converted and unconverted, are we bound to *act it out*? Should we not, in the ‘judgment of charity’ esteeming each who does not profess unbelief to be a believer, give him a place in the Church of Christ, and an entrance into all its rites and privileges?

The answer to these important questions is given by our Lord in these words. He teaches us most distinctly, that the difference between the converted and unconverted, the Church and the world, is to be kept up. The difference to His eye is as wide as that which severs between a swine and a sheep. He would have us *see* it, and *act upon it*. His fold is an enclosure walled in, with a door, at which the porter stands, to keep out dogs and swine. Rude as it may be, not to assume that every Englishman is a sheep of Christ,—Pharisaic as it may be accounted, to examine whether the clothing of each be the hair of the wolf, or the wool of the sheep,—it must be done.

A different treatment belongs to creatures so different, as dogs, and sons of God.

Hear then the Saviour’s law about this.

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.”

1. WHAT ARE OUR “HOLY THINGS?”

The Saviour has appointed solemn rites. 1. Baptism. 2. The Lord’s Supper. 3. The washing of the saints’ feet: John xiii. As appointed by this Divine Teacher, they are holy: are we to admit to them all, without discrimination? No: we are to exclude “dogs.”

Who are they?

They are men who in their tempers resemble dogs.

The dog under the law was an unclean animal. It did not divide the hoof and chew the cud. Hence it could not be touched without producing uncleanness. It might not be eaten. Jesus then, under this figure, teaches us the deep-seated difference between the fallen sons of Adam, and those renewed by grace. But among the fallen, there are differences of the forms of sin. The Saviour singles out two: dogs and swine. The dog, spiritually taken, answers to the unrenewed man, whose soul is covetous, selfish, grasping, prowling, growling, snarling, passionate, fierce, a murmurer, contentious.

Says a traveller—"A still greater nuisance than even the multitude of such low and disreputable characters that infest the suburbs of eastern cities, is found in the dogs that prowl about everywhere. It is scarcely possible for an European to form an idea of the intolerable nuisance occasioned in the villages and cities of the East, by the multitude of dogs that infest the streets. The natives, accustomed from their earliest years to the annoyance, come to be regardless of it; but to a stranger, these creatures are the greatest plague to which he is subjected; for as they are never allowed to enter a house, and do not constitute the property of any particular owner, they display none of those habits of which the domesticated species among us are found susceptible, and are destitute of all those social qualities which often render the dog the trusty and attached friend of man,—the lively companion, the faithful guardian, and the favourite on every hearth. Instead of the gentle, attractive, and almost rational creature he appears to be among us, the race seems wholly to degenerate in the warm regions of the East, and to approximate to the character of beasts of prey,

as in disposition they are ferocious, cunning, blood-thirsty, and possessed of the most insatiable voracity: and even in their very form, there is something repulsive; their sharp and savage features; their wolf-like eyes; their long, hanging ears; their straight and pointed tails; their lank and emaciated forms almost entirely without a belly, give them an appearance of wretchedness and degradation that stands in sad contrast with the general condition and qualities of the breed in Europe. They are almost wholly outcasts from human habitations; and consequently, in Asiatic countries, the beautiful traits of canine fidelity and attachment are altogether unknown. There the hand of man is seldom extended to offer the stroke, or the morsel of kindness; and the creature that receives or snatches it from the unwilling hand, would, in a few hours after, if an opportunity offered, mangle and devour the corpse of his benefactor without the smallest repugnance. These hideous creatures, dreaded by the people for their ferocity, or avoided by them as useless and unclean, are obliged to prowl about everywhere in search of a precarious subsistence: and, as they have never been subjected to any discipline, and run generally in bands, their natural ferocity, inflamed by hunger, and the consciousness of strength, makes them the most troublesome and dangerous visitors to the stranger who unexpectedly finds himself in their neighbourhood, as they will not scruple to seize whatever he may have about him, and even (in the event of his falling, and being otherwise defenceless) to attack and devour him. It is chiefly, however, at night, that these prowlers are the most formidable; for even those which lie during the heat of the day, lazy, inactive, and scarcely raising

their heads to growl at the passenger who may have chanced to trample on them, run about whenever the shades begin to fall, and the inhabitants to disappear from the streets, and are so intolerable by their perpetual din, and their sudden and furious attacks, that it is an attempt never made without the greatest risk, to walk abroad at night, and without sufficient protection."

1. Before any then is baptized, we should examine him as to his spiritual state. Is he born of Adam's race only? Or is he begotten from above? The preparation for baptism, as Peter tells us, is a *cleansed conscience*. And questions are to be put, to draw out as far as man may, the state of that. "As the antitype whereunto (to Noah's escape) baptism doth now save us also, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but *the answer of a good conscience* toward God:" 1 Pet. iii. 21. (See Greek.) And if so, then, of course, there can be no infant baptism.

2. Again, the Lord's Supper is a holy thing. The bread and wine represent the body and blood of the Lord. It is designed for those who trust the Saviour's death, as their atonement before God. It is not to be accounted a common supper, even by those who are cleansed before God. It is for those not of the world, who are not to be condemned with the world: 1 Cor. xi. 26—35. Even sons of the Most High are warned not to partake of it unworthily, lest they should be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and afflicted of God, because of their trespass. Much more then are the unrenewed to be kept from it. "Give not that which is so holy to the dogs."

"Neither cast ye your pearls before the swine."

What are "pearls?"

Methinks, that under this figure, the Saviour alludes to the deeper truths of the gospel, in which the believer finds his pleasure and profit. Pearls are gems of lustre, beauty, and value, originally concealed beneath the valves of a shellfish. The truths then of Christian experience, the depths of prophecy, the mysteries of God * which you have drawn for yourself out of the shell that concealed them, these are pearls spiritual. They are fit subjects of thought, discussion, enjoyment, between Christians communing over their Bibles. They are "yours." God, in giving them, designed them for *you*.† But they are not to be thrown before "swine."

Who are "swine?"

They are men whose characters resemble that animal, pronounced unclean by Moses' law. "The swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud: he is unclean to you:" Lev. xi. 7. Under this figure Jesus holds forth to our view the man of the world, who lives for himself, seeking only his own pleasure in the enjoyments of the world, the glutton, drunkard, fornicator, whose god is his belly, who minds earthly things: who sees reality only in what his senses show him, and despises all beside as 'moonshine.'

Jesus then forbids us to treat the ungodly as if he were a child of God, by admitting him to Christ's sacred rites, and to the solemn communings of believers. Why are we not to do so? We come then secondly to—

* Such as Paul's allegory of Abraham's two wives and sons: Gal. iv.

† Here is another proof, that the Sermon on the Mount is for believers.

II. THE REASONS OF THE PROHIBITION.

“Lest they trample them under their feet.”

If you despise this warning, and act as if all were alike renewed, your indiscriminating simplicity will not change the nature of the dog and swine, but it will break out in mischief in two directions.

1. They will profane the holy things entrusted to your care. They will despise what is peculiarly dedicated to God, and by you received with solemnity and reverence befitting its sacredness. Has no one, at the parish church, felt how the careless irreverence of the known ungodly chilled his spirit, and hindered his devotion at the Supper of the Lord?

The unclean has no title to what is holy. He is not made holy thereby. But he profanes what he touches: Hag. ii. 11—13. That which you reverently take in your hand, he casts under his feet.

“And turn again and rend you.”

These creatures will run after what you throw out at them. But after the hog has snuffed at it, turned it over with his snout, finds it does not smell like food, and is not eatable, he will turn back upon the donor in wrath, as if insulted. Beware then of the teeth of the dog and the hog!

Some have supposed, that in these two consequences there is an introverted parallelism; that is, that the trampling under foot belongs to the swine which is last spoken of: and the turning again and rending applies to the dog, which was first mentioned. Without asserting anything positively, I doubt if it be so: because the ‘turning again’ is manifestly a result of the ‘casting’ of the pearl. You throw it beyond the

swine. It runs up to it; and then, dissatisfied, it lifts its tusk, to rip up your leg.

(1) The first ill result affected *the sacred rites of Christ*. Their beauty and value, sacredness and meaning, are lost, when applied to the ungodly. *They do not renew the old man: but the old man defiles them.* Hence it is certain, that baptismal regeneration is no part of Christ's doctrine: but is denied by Him. Baptism does not turn the dog into the sheep. Else Jesus had bid us give the holy things to the unholy, by way of cleansing them. “The sow that was bathed,” may, and will return “to its wallowing in the mire:” 2 Pet. ii. 22. The Lord's Supper is not designed to change the swine into a lamb. It is food designed only for those already clean.

(2) The second ill effect touches *the disciple himself*. “Turn again and rend you.” Your treating them as sons of God, and faithful brethren, will not make them so. They will only be stirred up to ridicule you, and the truths you hold; to pour contempt on what you know to be sacred, and to wound you in your deepest affections. It is indeed a mistake which young Christians are apt to make, when they feel sure, that truths which seem so clear, and are felt so important by themselves, must affect all alike. But “Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon.”

Let us now compare this word of the Saviour with what is analogous in the Mosaic law.

1. First, then, the Mosaic law defined what animals were clean, and what unclean. The unclean were neither to be touched nor eaten. In this consisted the holiness of the Jew. “Ye shall be HOLY MEN unto Me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field: ye shall cast it to THE DOGS:” Ex. xxii. 31.

The priests were to "put difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean:" Lev. x. 10.

2. Now the distinction of the law as regards clean and unclean animals, and meats, is done away, as the vision to Peter showed (Acts x. 14, 28); and as Paul directly, and in plain words asserts. "There is nothing unclean of itself:" Rom. xiv. 14. The distinction between circumcised flesh, and uncircumcised flesh, is done away. The Gentile is not unclean, because a Gentile; nor the Jew clean, because a Jew.

But while the old form of cleanness and uncleanness is removed, the principle of separation is only deepened. It is removed from the flesh to the spirit. It is not *ceremonial* now; it is *real*. It is the great difference which *God* the searcher of the hearts sees to exist, and has caused to exist. The unclean now is he whose *heart* is unrenewed, and out of whose mouth, as from a fountain, the bitter waters of death flow: Mark vii. 1—7, 14—23. The leper now is the *spiritual* leper. He is not to sojourn among the clean. He is to dwell outside the camp. He would infect the clean: the clean cannot cleanse him.

The Redeemer therefore gives His disciples the place of the Israelite, and of the priest.

1. The Israelite had his holy things. None but the circumcised might eat of his paschal lamb. "There shall no stranger eat thereof." If a stranger would partake, he must leave his Gentile position. He must by circumcision become a son of the law: Ex. xii. 43—49.

2. The priest was master of the temple and its holy things. He had his part in the sacrifices of the Lord, both of the holy and the most holy. The priestly family was to partake. But might he give of this

sacred banquet to those outside? "There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest, or an hired servant shall not eat of the holy thing:" Lev. xxii. 10. "And they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer unto the Lord:" Lev. xxii. 15; xix. 8. He who profaned the Lord's things, should be cut off from among His people.

We then, as priests of God, consecrated by blood and water, have charge of God's holy things of this dispensation. They are ours to partake of, but we may not give them to the unclean. The law which fenced off Israel from the Gentiles in principle exists still, though the separation is not of the flesh, but of the spirit.

1. Hence follow several lessons to the disciple. The parable of the Lamp and its Stand directed the individual as soon as he believed, or was regenerate by the Holy Spirit, to seek *Church fellowship*. This teaches *those already in fellowship whom to admit among themselves, and whom to reject*. They are to exclude all the unrenewed from communion. Dogs and swine are not to be admitted into the flock of the sheep of Christ. But if so, then there is to be a door of entrance for all those that *are* renewed. It is enough that any be a sheep of Christ, to warrant our admission, and to condemn our exclusion. It does not turn upon his degree of knowledge, or his entire following with us. His ignorance or mistake on the subject of baptism, or other subjects, does not give us the right to shut him out. It is only when a brother, so-called, puts on the dog or the swine, that we may put him outside for a while: 1 Cor. v.

2. Here see the mischief of the union of the Church

with the State : in other words, of the binding together of the *Church* and the *world*.

Jesus distinguishes between the sheep and the swine, and commands disciples to distinguish also. But when we speak to a Churchman of the separation of believers from unbelievers, we often hear it replied, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." That is, in their view, it is unlawful to say, 'That is a covetous, unconverted man,'—and, 'This is a saint, a member of Christ.' Now, if this were true, the whole idea of a Church, as an assembly of believers recognising one another as separate from an evil world, must be given up. The teaching of our Saviour and His apostles, however, is based on the decree of God, that there is to be a body of such persons, known to each other as saints, and standing aloof from an evil world. It is true, that the distinction is not now so outwardly conspicuous, as then it was, when on the one side there was the worshipper of the idol Venus, and on the other the servant of God and His Christ. But it is certain still that there is a rooted difference, a diversity of nature, between those born again of the Spirit of God, and the unconverted sons of Adam. Does Jesus *forbid* us to distinguish them? He *commands* it. We are to discriminate between the sheep and the swine, between the sons of God, and sons of the devil. We are even to discern between *different kinds of sinners*, represented by different classes of unclean animals. And, a few paragraphs onward, Jesus bids us to distinguish the teachers of true doctrine and true prophets from false prophets. We are to look at their actions and tempers as our guides in our decision.

Moreover, we are to make a marked difference in our *conduct* towards the one and the other. The believer is

not to hold fellowship with the worldly, in the sacred rites appointed by Christ. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs : " Matt. xv. 26.

And now observe a very interesting truth. The upholders of national systems of Christianity reverse the two precepts of Jesus contained in verses 1 and 6 respectively.

1. Jesus *forbids* His disciples to *judge as the magistrate*, and to condemn the criminals of society. 2. He *commands* His disciples to *judge as the priest*. He bids them to set a difference between the holy and unholy, to recognise the spiritual gulf which separates the converted and the unconverted.

But established Christianity, consisting of the nation in general, with its rulers at the head, *authorizes the exercise of worldly power*, and pronounces and executes sentence on offenders against civil law. It classes its citizens civilly, pronouncing the one, good and honest ; the other, the felon and the unworthy. It *classifies sinners*, defining the one as excellent, the other as unclean, according to their actions before society. Where God says, "*There is no difference*, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," it insists that there *is*. But where God sees difference even to contrast—it *beholds none*, and *prohibits its followers from marking the essential distinction between the sons of God, and the children of the Wicked One*. All its subjects are, by *birth*, fit for the ordinances of Christ, and are, after the rite is performed, to be accounted "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

The two judgments then cannot stand together.

(1) *Judge* where our Lord has *forbidden*, and (2) you must *refuse* to judge where He has *commanded* you.

Bring in worldly rule and magistracy into the Church of Christ, and impurity of communion must assuredly result. You must take the world's standard, and measure by her cubit. Be just in *civil* causes, and you must be lax in *spiritual* things. Plead for the Christian's executing justice against the offenders of the world, and you must also plead for the shutting out of spiritual discrimination. You must throw open what is holy to the unclean, and refuse to put out the spiritually uncircumcised from the house of God, which is the Church.

If then the Church would be pure, she must be lowly. She must not covet the entrance of the great, and the ruler. She must not touch the sword of magistracy.

But a difficulty has been started on this subject. 'If we are not to give what is holy to dogs, nor to cast our pearls before swine, how shall we preach the gospel to the unconverted? How shall we fulfil the Saviour's other word?—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."'

Those who have followed the author intelligently through this subject, will have little difficulty in solving this. Jesus is not forbidding the *preaching of the gospel* to any, however profane. That keeps the worldly man in his true place, *outside the fold*, but invited to believe. It tells him he is a sinner, unrenewed and unforgiven. It calls upon him in Christ's name, to seek forgiveness. You are not forbid to try and *win every man for Christ*. Only, do not assume, that every man already is Christ's. Jesus forbids only His admission *within the fold*, while still impenitent. Our Lord prohibits His disciples from administering to the worldly, baptism, and the Supper; for these are holy rites, designed for the children of

God. He bids them, not to commune with unbelievers as if they were believers, nor to overlook the vast difference between converted and unconverted. To tell the leper how he may be cleansed, while he stands outside the house, is one thing. To admit him, while uncleaned, to sit at table with you, is quite another. To show the jewels in your casket to your tried friend is one thing. To take them out, and lay them before a thief, is another.

There are two classes of instruction which our Lord discovers to us in His gospel commission. "Go ye, (1) *make disciples* of all nations, (2) and *baptize* them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (3) *teaching them to observe* all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Here (1) the teaching of the truths that are to make converts is commanded. But the (2) rite of baptism, and the (3) instruction which is to edify believers belong to those made disciples. The "holy things" of Christ and the pearls of the kingdom are for sons, inside the house.

See, then, Christians, the dignity of your position as entrusted with the holy things of God! Yours are the pearls of God; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are for you; despised by the world and its rulers, they are ordained for your glory and joy. You are priests to God and His Christ: now to serve Him here below, hereafter in His temple above! Yours is it to sit at a table spread by God, and to feast upon the body and blood of the Lord. To you is offered the joy of sitting down one day with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God! Press on to it, as to the goal set before you! By God's decree, keep away from His table the ungodly. When you celebrate the Supper,

then should there be a visible severance between the one and the other. It will one day be eternal! The strifes, and taunts, and ridicule, and spitefulness, and slanders received from them will then be wholly ended! Look up with hope! "The Lord is at hand."

Reader, are you a believer? Do you tarry among the dogs and swine? Are you a sheep? Your place is within the fold. You can but suffer loss, while you stay without—loss now, loss when Christ shall come. Are you a lit lamp? Lamp, to your stand!

But is my reader unchanged? How does God regard you? What does Christ think of you? To what does the lowly, gentle Saviour compare you? He describes you as the dog or the swine. They are not my words, but His.

What is your spiritual character in God's sight? Are you contentious and a caviller at God's word and truth? Do you growl at His providence? Are you grasping and selfish? Are you a profane man and a swearer, fierce, passionate, a blasphemer? Do you take up Pilate's sneer—"What is truth?" Do you launch Festus's sharp words at God's ministers and servants, "Paul, thou art beside thyself?" Then I leave you to decide what animal you resemble!

Or are you one who think nothing real but what a man may see, smell, touch, taste, handle? Do you think that in eating and drinking lies the chief delight of life? Are you the fornicator and the drunkard? Are you obscene in your words, corrupting to those you come near? Do you take pleasure in the evil song, and the drunken carouse? Do you tread under foot God's truth, as that which would bridle and school your lusts, and make you unhappy by its fetters? Then,

in these traits of your spirit, you will see what animal you are like.

It is not pleasing, no doubt, to have these things brought before you. But were it not better to learn it now at man's lips, than from the mouth of the judge on the throne?

God bids believers now to keep you aloof, when His table is spread. Perhaps you have seen Christians fulfilling the command of the Lord's Supper as required. The line of demarcation between the two is drawn of God. 'Tis happily not eternal. 'Tis not yet the gulf which is fixed between the rich man and Lazarus. You may cross that line. You may seek and find forgiveness. You may enter the fold. Seek to become a sheep of Christ. Else, by and bye, the line will be impassable, the difference fixed as eternity.

When God's holy city shall descend, glittering with its precious stones, its jasper walls, its gates of pearl, it will be for ever shut to you. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, will admit the holy alone. No draught of those crystal waters of life to the thirsty, cursed of God! No part in that golden city of perpetual summer and ceaseless noon, for the sons of darkness, who would not be "light in the Lord!"

The unclean then must be unclean for ever. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." "For *without are dogs*, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

A friend lately told me a striking anecdote of Rowland Hill. A godly sister, after many attempts, brought an ungodly brother to hear him. He was a

proud fastidious man, that could not bear anything that was not perfectly refined. She was therefore fearful, lest some of Rowland Hill's homely sayings should disgust him, and close his ears against the truth.

That Sunday morning the preacher began his sermon in this way. "A day or two ago, as I was walking along the street, I saw some pigs, with many a grunt following a man with a bag. I wondered to see them running after him, till I looked on the pavement, and observed, that from time to time he scattered some beans, which they snapped up in haste, and then pursued him afresh. He came to a corner of the street, and I lost sight of him. However, I thought, 'I will follow him to the end: what does it mean?' I went on, and found that he led them *into the slaughterhouse!* *Is it not thus with the devil, and some of you?*"

The sister durst not look at her brother, but thought, that now for ever he would be prejudiced against the truth, put in so rugged a way. She asked him, however, when it was over, what he thought of it? He replied, "That he did not listen much to the rest of the sermon, after the story of the pigs, for it seemed to him, that it was so like himself. He was following the devil for sinful pleasures, and *the slaughterhouse at last!*"

It pleased God to bless it to his conversion. May it please God to bless it thus to some reader of this!

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

Matt. vii. 7—12.

7. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. 8. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it is opened."*

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proud fastidious man, that could not bear anything that was not perfectly refined. She was therefore fearful, lest some of Rowland Hill's homely sayings should disgust him, and close his ears against the truth.

That Sunday morning the preacher began his sermon in this way. "A day or two ago, as I was walking along the street, I saw some pigs, with many a grunt following a man with a bag. I wondered to see them running after him, till I looked on the pavement, and observed, that from time to time he scattered some beans, which they snapped up in haste, and then pursued him afresh. He came to a corner of the street, and I lost sight of him. However, I thought, 'I will follow him to the end: what does it mean?' I went on, and found that he led them *into the slaughterhouse!* *Is it not thus with the devil, and some of you?*"

The sister durst not look at her brother, but thought, that now for ever he would be prejudiced against the truth, put in so rugged a way. She asked him, however, when it was over, what he thought of it? He replied, "That he did not listen much to the rest of the sermon, after the story of the pigs, for it seemed to him, that it was so like himself. He was following the devil for sinful pleasures, and *the slaughterhouse at last!*"

It pleased God to bless it to his conversion. May it please God to bless it thus to some reader of this!

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

Matt. vii. 7—12.

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the Lord my God, and have done according to *all* that Thou hast commanded me." Thereupon, as one that was sinless, he lifts his petition for his nation. "Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the land which Thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey:" Deut. xxvi.

Here is no petition for divine aid in trouble, no asking for strength to perform duty, no calling of God Father, nor was there any demand on him for prayer to Jehovah when he had returned to his Galilean house!

No! Those things were not suited to the law and its fundamental assumptions. The man was righteous: what need had he to seek forgiveness? He was to observe the whole of the law, according to his engagement and his father's covenant. There was no promise of aid. He was to furnish the power himself. Then "all the people answered together, and said, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do.*" Ex. xix. 8. What need to deliver him out of trouble? If he were sinless, as he professed, God undertook to set him in the midst of blessing, and keep him out of trial.

But who could truly assert his perfect obedience? Thus the law was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He comes, assuming the flesh to be worthless. He teaches the need of God's grace from first to last. And so the Sermon on the Mount opens up prayer in a new light.

Here is the Saviour's three times repeated command to pray. "Ask! Seek! Knock!"

Great is our need: its forms are manifold. Great is our slowness: it needs a spur. *What* may we pray for? For great things and for small: for the imbedded thorn that troubles our finger-tip, as well as for the

bullet that has lodged in our bone: for the safe coming of a letter, as well as for the life of a mother. For ourselves and for others: for the Church and for the world. None need be at a loss for subjects of prayer.

"Ask!"

Do you feel your need? Would you fain find a remedy for the various ills of life? Here it is divinely prescribed. Your aid lies in God: He can hear, He will help.

1. Ask for God's glory. That rightly comes first. How different is the world's atmosphere from that pure air which we would breathe! How heavy the sleep of death upon the multitudes around! How few, even of God's own people are astir for Him! Most seem like those just roused from heavy slumber. We would see earth full of the rays of God's love. We would behold its vales and hills white with the light of grace. We would see our world full of God's glory as the heaven is. We would see the Great Dragon, the angel of night, spread his wings and flee. We would behold Death a chained captive, and the curse borne away, like a gibbet never more to be used.

These things *shall* be done. God has said so. We can hasten them. Let us do it! "Ask!"

2. We should pray for *our own need*.

Are we drowsy, indifferent? Do we feel the world's frosty air stealing away the warmth of life? Are we afraid whereto it will advance? Do we need grace to meet the trials, which, with unusual frequency and obstinacy, assail our little fortress? Send up your appeal to God! "Ask!"

Are you tempted to give up your Christian profession? Are you in danger of turning back to the world, because of the sneers and persecution of your comrades? Do

you feel how little courage you have to confess Christ? Do you need armour, strength, courage? There is an armoury above, whence all these things may be obtained for the Christian warrior. "Ask!"

Are you sensible of having once possessed what now you have lost? Are you a backslider? Have you forfeited your peace and joy in God? When you pray, does it seem as if none heard? Does your prayer appear to be sent back unanswered, like a note from the Dead-Letter Post-Office? Did you feel once, like a traveller who has started at early dawn with spirits buoyant as the lark, tripping through green lanes and overhanging elms, beside the dancing streamlet, amidst the glad sunshine, the fragrance of the blooming may, and the song of the nightingale? Do you feel *now* like the tired traveller of winter, that has lost his way, and lost his purse upon a desert heath, with night, starless night, settled around, the wind laden with sleet blinding his eyes, chilled to the bone with the cutting gale, and fearful of pits at every step?

Poor backslider! Confess your guilt! Acknowledge your spiritual slumber, and the victory Satan has gained over you through your prayerlessness. Seek the restoration of your forfeited peace! 'Lord, I seek! let me find!'

Observe, that the Saviour calls for our *activity*. We are not to sit down after our loss, and wait till God restores us. Even when the riches of God the Great Giver are spread out before us to cover our varied necessities, our activity is still commanded. "Seek!" With prayer use effort. God addresses you as an active being. He will meet you in the use of the means which lie in your reach. God means to give you a heavy harvest. Rise and sow! He promises

you a precious cargo from your distant port. Rise merchant, spread your sail! "Seek!"

Would you understand God's word? You may. There is no limit set to your acquisition of spiritual understanding. Scripture is a California full of golden sands and lumps of gold. But he who would get rich therefrom must seize the spade and sieve, and ply the diligent hand.

Yonder is the house of a friend whom you wish to see. But he is not visible. He is not in his garden, or in the street. The walls shut him from your sight. The door is bolted. How shall you obtain an interview? The house itself furnishes the answer. 'Tis constructed with a view to such a case as yours. What is that lion's head, and the semicircle of iron that hangs from it? 'Tis a knocker. It was set there by the owner, that you might make known to the servants and himself, that some one wishes to see him. He shows thereby, that he intends to listen to the calls of those outside who so address him.

'Tis thus with the door of heaven. God has provided for the expression of His people's need. He is not a surly householder, over whose door you read,—'No admittance.' Monarch as He is, He does not keep you at a distance. He does not confine you to a set ceremonial, and limited time of audience. "Knock!" Though you come as the beggar, not to bring a present, but to carry away an alms, "Knock!"

Are you in trouble? Seeking a refuge? Do you feel as if hunted from every shelter? Do as our startled countrymen did, when the roar of mutiny shook them from troubled sleep, and amidst burning houses and cracking guns, and the shrieks of the overtaken and slaughtered, they pressed on to the one

friendly spot. 'There, there is the fort! Once within its massive walls, I shall be safe!' How loudly and long, with what reiterated peals, would the trembling fugitive thunder at the gate! Each sight, each sound of terror outside would give keenness to the desire for the peace within. Christian! So "Knock!"

With the COMMAND comes the PROMISE.

"Ask, and it shall be given you! Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you."

The hope of success cheers to exertion. Here the hope amounts to certainty.

The Son here pledges the Father. God is a God of truth. He will keep His word. 'Tis not an experiment tried with many chances against it, but still the only hope. 'Tis not like Jacob's arraying of his family and goods. "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face: peradventure he will accept of me." 'Tis not with us as with the heathen captain of Tarshish. "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

Where a promise is made by a man of his word, possessed of the will and power to perform it, the fulfilment is sure. But what are the will and power of man compared with that of God?

Some are troubled and fainthearted, because of the felt feebleness of 'our unworthy prayers.' But prayer rests not upon its own merits. I do not hope to receive my petition, because I have put up an appropriate, beautifully expressed, Scriptural, eloquent prayer. Its force and its success are derived from the Mediator. Our prayers, aye, the very best, are 'unworthy.' But they prevail through another. There is a poor widow, a washerwoman, burthened with a large

family. It strikes her, that if her Majesty Queen Victoria but knew of her sad case, she should receive speedy and permanent relief. She writes to her sovereign. What a letter for a queen! On paper discoloured, crumpled, soiled, grease-spotted, wrongly addressed, ill-spelled, ill-composed, full of bad grammar, with a wafer stamped by her thimble! But it reaches the hand of Prince Albert. His heart is touched. He pleads her cause. Now where are the bad grammar, the awkward English, the false spelling, the ignorance of court etiquette, and of the true way of addressing a queen? Gone! gone! all fled! You hear nothing now but the perfect ease, and grace, and fervency, and power of the prince. He speaks as a husband to his wife. The suit is won! 'Twas not the worthiness of the washerwoman's letter that was so powerful, but the Royal Consort's appeal.

We are further encouraged. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it is opened." God's liberality is an immeasurable, inexhaustible ocean. The riches of the wealthiest of kings would break down and fail under the appeals from all the poor of his realm. He may aid a few. But he cannot listen to the petitions of all. His treasury could not stand the drain. But amidst a million applicants each Lord's day lifting their petitions in distant lands, God is undistracted. In ways unthought of, at times quite unexpected, oft the answer comes.

How often is a prayer answered long after it has been forgot? "Zacharias, THY PRAYER IS HEARD!" What prayer? "Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son." That prayer had been put up often and

zealously. But with waning probability, Zacharias's faith failed : he ceased to ask, he ceased to expect. It dropped from his recollection. And now, just when it is to be granted, he will not believe a messenger from heaven, that it is close on its fulfilment.

9. "Or what man is there of you, of whom if his son ask bread, will he in answer give him a stone? 10. Or if he ask a fish, will he in answer give him a serpent? * 11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father Who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"

Monarchs sometimes wear idle titles, or titles really false. For how many years did the kings of England style themselves "Kings of France," while yet they had hardly a footing in that country! But it is not thus with God. Jesus His Son has taught us to call God our Father. He is the Father of all believers, and with the title He wears also the *heart* of a father.

Before they pray, God's gracious heart is disposed to do His children good. He feels for their need, ere they express it. He sympathizes with their sorrows, before they pour them out in His presence.

Jesus appeals to the fathers round Him, whether they were not ready to grant their children what was good and necessary, ere they asked it. Their sons might certainly trust them, that they would not take advantage of their superior wisdom, to give them what was evil. Ill-will may deceive simplicity, and put into its hand something resembling its petition, and something having a show of good, while yet it would injure. But would a father give his child a round flint instead

* The force of *ενιδουσαι*.

of a loaf? A flint possessed of no power to sustain life, and ready to break his teeth? Or if he desired a fish in his hunger, would he give him a serpent, to cause him pain and death by its bite? All would reply, No!

This holds good, in spite of the selfish and malignant tendencies of fallen human nature. The very men who might play such tricks with another's children, would not do so with their own. The merchant who in the market would seize every unfair advantage to palm off an inferior or noxious article upon his fellow-man, would not do so with his children. He regards them as a part of himself. He *should* feel love to *all*: but the only green spot in the wilderness of his bosom is his love to his children. Love shields *them* from the effects of the selfish and malignant east winds which blow everywhere else across his domain.

But if children may trust their parents' benevolence, in spite of tempers, malevolent and banefully active in all other directions, how much more may the children of God trust *their* Father! He is "Good," the only good. In Him dwells no malignancy, no selfishness. Then will *He* give to His children assuredly, whatever is good.

How brief, but how forcible, those two words—"BEING EVIL!" It tells us at a glance what Christ thought of human nature. It discloses to us, like a sudden flash of lightning in the night, the whole murky landscape. What is the verdict of Him who knows what is man? What says the Creator, the Preserver, of the race that tenants the globe? 'You are *evil*!' He does not attempt proof. He assumes it as a first principle, so obvious, or so often proved, as not to need proof. Let moralists talk of the

dignity and innate goodness of man, till spoiled by corrupt example ! Jesus assumes it as true universally, and from inward disorder of the soul, that the race is "EVIL." This is the gospel's foundation. No architect is sent to repair a palace which is perfect within and without. No shipowner commissions carpenters to restore a vessel which is sound from stem to stern, from maintop to keel.

Here is the grace of God and of His Son ! It is to us "being evil," that the message of reconciliation is sent. It was not with anticipation of a glad welcome amidst the ruined sons of man, that Jesus left the regions of splendour and love, for the dark, cold, foggy realm below. He knew its mount to be the Mount of Scorpions, and its dale, the Valley of Serpents. "God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

From the same sentiment of the benevolence of God, it results, that He will *not* give His children what is evil, *though they ask it*. If a son ask his father for a venomous snake, with scales of green and gold glittering in the sun, will the father give it ? Or if, in answer to a son's importunity, something in itself injurious be granted in displeasure, will not something to counteract the evil effects, be given also ? Here is a lesson which a loving mother gave to her young child. She was "pickling some peaches [twas in America], and had just taken them from the salt and water with which they had become thoroughly impregnated, when Maria came into the kitchen, and asked for one. She had eaten ripe peaches in their natural state, and supposed these to be of the same kind. In vain she was assured that they were not good to eat, that they were both bitter and salt ; in short, worse

than any medicine she had ever tasted. Maria knew they were good, and knew she would like them. Finally, her mother told her she might have one, on condition that she should eat the whole, which she gladly promised to do. But no sooner had she taken a mouthful, than it was rejected with the most bitter disgust. 'I never tasted anything so ugly in my life : mayn't I have something to take the taste out of my mouth ?'

"'No, my dear, you must eat it all ; you know that was the condition on which I gave it you.'

"Maria began to cry. 'O mamma, you wont make me eat that nasty thing ?'

"'Yes, Maria, you must abide by your own choice : you see now you had better have believed me.'

"Maria was 'sure she could never get it down,' 'sure it would make her sick, it would kill her ;' but her mother was firm. At length, with the help of a piece of bread which her mother allowed her, and with tears and sighs, the nauseous morsel was fairly swallowed. But Maria did not soon forget the lesson it taught her."

The conclusion of the Saviour's inferring is not exactly such as we should have expected from the former part of the sentence. 'If you men give good things to your children, how much more will God give to *His children?*'—would have been the natural close. Instead, Jesus says, "*To them that ask Him.*" It is fairly implied, that Jesus is speaking of disciples, or of the children of God. Here then is a description of God's children. They call upon His name. They appeal in their need to God : for aid given they return thanks. They who do not pray then, are not God's children. Do you never pray, reader ?

It is God's good pleasure, therefore, that they should ask Him for what they need. Earth's parents may bestow food and clothing on their family without being asked. Meals come round, and they are called in. But 'tis God's set design that His children should pray. He knows, before they supplicate. But 'tis for their good, and for His glory that they should pray.

Here is a constant evidence to every believer of His sonship. He goes to God. He goes as to a Father. He approaches through the Son—the Holy Spirit teaches Him to apply with the spirit of a son. He needs not to be perpetually inquiring whether he is born of God, or no. And the answers to his petitions show, that he is not asking in vain. God hears. Here is the proof. 'Did your brother in Ireland get the letter you sent him about his bill?' 'Oh yes: his reply came yesterday: and a post-office order for the amount.' Proof sufficient, is it not? Thus we know, that God hears our prayers.

But here is an opening for others beside the sons of God. Reader, are you a sinner yet unforgiven, burdened with your trespasses? What do you need? 'Forgiveness!' Will you be lost without it? Will you be shut up in the debtor's dungeon for ever, if you do not get it? Will you be companion of devils, and the howling damned, unless you obtain it? Friend, God gives good things to them that ask Him.

Have you asked?

'No!'

Ah, then, here is the secret of your burthen.

If you wish this good thing, you must ask Him. Call upon Him *now!*

Do *you* say?—'I have called, but I am no better than I was.'

'Indeed! Did you ask in Christ's name, yet were refused?'

'Yes!'

'What makes you think you are refused?'

'I do not feel any better or happier!'

'Just as I supposed! But does God say, that you are to know when you are forgiven, by feeling happy? I must tell you, you are forgiven! God says so. "EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH." You asked forgiveness, you say! You *received* it then, *when you asked!* You are confounding the *feeling* of forgiveness, with the *obtaining* of forgiveness. You may *have* forgiveness, without any signal instantly given in your own bosom, that it has taken place. If I say to a poor widow, 'I will put a thousand pounds to your credit in the bank,' must she know the moment I do it, by a feeling of joy within? It is enough, that God says it. Trust God's promise, whatever you feel.'

In the latter verse, our Lord gives us strong encouragement to pray. He gives us reason to hold out, though our prayer is not at once answered. He tells us the *inclination* of the party of whom we ask. We are not pressing our suit in ignorance. Would it not have made a great difference in the feelings of Joseph's brethren when coming to buy corn, if one could have whispered to them, that on that gilded chair, and beneath those Egyptian garments, and that formal head-dress, and clipped beard, a countryman, a Hebrew, was seated? When they were brought as prisoners before him, as thieves of the silver cup, would not Judah's heart have throbb'd less, could some one have given him proofs, that he who was next to Pharaoh's

throne, was *Joseph their brother*? Would not Estl have been encouraged to throw herself on the kin mercy, could she have known the love of Ahasuerus her? Would it not have allayed Peter's impatien could he have known what was passing in the house John whose surname was Mark?

The angel had brought him out of the dungeon— All the toils of death that encircled his feet had snapped like tow. He had come forth out of the iron cage rescued was he from the axe that overhung his head? He has knocked at the door of a friendly-house. He is in haste to obtain shelter from the eyes of the passers-by,—from the possible pursuit of the keepers of the prison. He knocks. No answer. Are they asleep? No, he hears voices. There is, he thinks, a sound of feet along the well-known passage. 'Who is there?' 'Tis I, Peter.' But the feet then retreat, and the soul is gone. 'What *can* be the reason of their keeping me thus in the cold, and in danger of my life? Is it the house of an enemy? Are all asleep? No! one at these events, is awake. 'Twas a female voice. How unkind of her to detain me thus!

But suppose, now, that the angel who accompanied him so far, had been with him at the door, and had interpreted to him the scene within, would he not have been better content to wait? Could he have been made to know the joy of Rhoda, and the number of his friends met there to pray for him, and their earnest surprise, and their animated discussion as to the possibility of its being himself, would he not have felt that in *such* delay, there was no shadow of indifference, or semblance of *denial*?

May not this strengthen our faith to hold out when *God* delays? 'Tis a FATHER inside the house. Do

Peter did. "He *continued* knocking." And at length the door was opened, and what a throng of delighted faces grouped around the door, and what a burst of glad voices hailed him then! Knock on, Christian! and learn from delayed Peter's adventure, that "to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

THE GOLDEN RULE,

AND

THE TWO WAYS.

Matt. vii. 12—14.

12. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye wish that men should do to you, so do ye also unto them : for this is the law and the prophets."

THIS is that saying of our Master, which for its brevity, its grace, its comprehensiveness as a guide of life, is called THE GOLDEN RULE.

Let us first consider its place and connection.

It is introduced by the word "therefore," which shows that it comes in as a consequence of something spoken previously. We may consider it, as the general conclusion from all the gracious precepts which the Saviour has given in reference to men in general, beginning from chap. v. 38, to the present paragraph. It is also the *specific* conclusion from the Saviour's words in the preceding verse. The Son of God had declared the Father's readiness to give good things to those who ask. It follows naturally, that the sons of that

Heavenly Father should resemble their Parent in grace. "Become ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect."

It forms the conclusion of the second great division of the Sermon on the Mount. The discourse is, I believe, constructed in three portions, as follows :—

DIVISION I.

1. { BEATITUDES.
2. { CHRISTIANS, SALT, LIGHT.
3. { CHRIST'S RELATION TO LAW. "*Law and Prophets.*"

DIVISION II.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| COMPARISON
OF GOSPEL
GRACE, WITH
THE LAW. | { | 1. MURDER. "YE HEARD THAT," ETC. |
| | | 2. ADULTERY. "YE HEARD THAT," ETC. |
| | | 3. DIVORCE. "NOW IT WAS SAID," ETC. |
| | | 4. OATHS. "AGAIN YE HEARD THAT," ETC. |
| | | 5. EYE FOR EYE. "YE HEARD THAT," ETC. |
| | | 6. LOVE OF ENEMIES. "YE HEARD THAT," ETC. |

- | | |
|---|--|
| { | 7. RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE SECRET WITH GOD. |
| | 8. TREASURES IN HEAVEN. |
| | 9. JUDGMENT. |
| | 10. GOLDEN RULE. ASK! " <i>Law and Prophets.</i> " |

DIVISION III.

4. { STRAIT GATE.
5. { FALSE PROPHETS.
6. { DOERS OF GOD'S WILL.
7. { THE TWO BUILDERS.

At the Golden Rule, the Saviour sums up the comparison of *His* system with "*the Law and the Prophets.*" And these words are designed to refer us back to the point at which the comparison began. They are like the hooks and eyes in the tabernacle, to couple together the curtains. The Saviour has given Ten New Commandments, enlarging or annulling previous precepts of the law of Moses. There are also two tables of Commandments. The first is distinguished from the second, by the introductory words which precede: 'Ye heard that it was said.' The order of the tables seems reversed—the first set being especially commands relating to duties toward our fellows: the second, precepts which bring in God more especially.

It seems to offer a designed comparison and contrast with the Decalogue; both in the division into two tables, and the commands being divided into six and four respectively.

Learned men have remarked, that sayings resembling our Lord's Golden Rule have, from time to time, been uttered by heathen moralists, or by Jews. Some have mentioned this, apparently to depress the Saviour's honour; as if others had discovered this truth before Him.

The speeches indicated are as follows:—

1. "Do that to no man which thou hatest:" Tobit iv. 15.

2. "A certain Gentile went to (Rabbi) Hillel, and said: 'Make me a proselyte, and teach me the whole law compendiously.' He made him a proselyte, and said: 'What is hateful to yourself, do not to your neighbour: for this is the whole law.'"

3. Mæcenas said: 'That which you would have one

in authority above you do to you, do you do, even without being asked to do it.'

4. 'Behave yourself among those below you, as you would have your superiors behave toward yourself,' said Isocrates to Nicocles.

5. Aristotle, on being asked—'How we should conduct ourselves toward our friends?' replied—'As you would desire them to act toward yourself.'

But these fall far short of the extent and grace of the Redeemer's saying. The two first maxims only forbid the doing of *evil*. Jesus teaches the doing of *good* as well. The two next teach only those of superior station to exercise kindness towards inferiors. Jesus' word embraces all, high and lowly alike. The last is peculiarly worthy of notice. Aristotle considers this Golden Rule, a rule for *friends*. Jesus' grace is seen in extending the precept to *men*—the fallen, the perverse, the persecuting. Aye, the rule of conduct to *foes*! Finally, even had the sages above quoted attained to the full breadth of the grace of Jesus, their words would have lacked authority, and motive. *Now* they go forth backed with the might of God. *Now* they bear in their left hand, threatening for the breaker of them; and in their right, promise to the obedient.

Strangely enough, many have cited the Golden Rule as if it were a rule of *justice*. No! 'Tis a rule of love, grace, and *mercy*. "*Love* worketh no ill to his neighbour." But *justice* does, to an *offending* neighbour. Righteousness deals back blow for blow. Hence those who see in this rule no more than righteousness, are obliged to except the magistrate from its application.

"For example," says President Davies, "a criminal

may plead,—‘If I were in the place of my judge, and he in mine, I would acquit him, and grant him his life.’ Or a judge might think, ‘If I were in the place of that poor criminal, I should be glad if my judge would forgive me, and therefore, if I would do as I would be done by, I must forgive him’” (vol. ii. p. 65.) Now if this were the rule of *righteousness*, it would have its fairest scope on the magistrates’ bench of *justice*. There it must, however, be excluded. And its exclusion is confirmation of the previous proof, that a disciple of Jesus ought not to be a magistrate.

“This is the Law and the Prophets.”

That is, this is the substance of all the commands of God given by Moses and the Prophets, so far as our duty toward our neighbour is concerned. Such is that message of God by Jeremiah: “Thus saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place:” Jer. xxii. 3. And that of Isaiah: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow:” Isa. i. 16, 17.

God has sought to bring selfish man to love his neighbour as himself. This selfishness breaks out to the injury of his neighbour in many ways,—theft, robbery, slander, lying, murder, adultery, fornication, curses, quarrels, fights, wars. His prohibition of these things had for its great foundation the attempt to set up the contrary spirit of love. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit

adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law:” Rom. xiii. 8—10. “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:” Gal. v. 14.

But neither Moses nor the Prophets ever ventured so far as the Lord Jesus. They had not the fulness of the Spirit; they were checked, too, by the hard hearts around them. Till the grace of the Father and of the Son should be revealed, and the Holy Spirit should regenerate, the time for such grace had not come.

The Golden Rule is far above the world’s standard and practice. If it swayed the market, how very different would be the scenes there! If every occupant of a stall would ask the fair price, and speak only the truth about his articles, not concealing their faults;—and if the buyer did not seek to take advantage on his side, and admit the excellency of the goods, where it was real, and sought not to beat down the fair price, what a wonderfully different atmosphere would encompass our market-place! ‘What is the price of that fowl?’ ‘One shilling and sixpence.’ ‘Tis too little. It is a fine large one. I will give you two shillings for it; it is well worth it.’ This would be a new strain indeed. The dullest ear would listen surprised, the most dim eye would see and marvel at the change! But now, when the maxim is—‘Buy at the cheapest, and sell at the dearest,’—the spirit of commerce is grasping and selfish to a degree. The tradesman

servicing out goods to a customer, would scout the idea of consulting his neighbour's interests as well as his own. 'Let him look to his own affairs. Every man for himself.'

But Christian, *Christian*, is it so with *you*? You are to be the world's light. Do you steer by the world's compass, or by Christ's? Do you not care whether you run down another's ship, so that your own escapes damage?

Christian master! Do you give your servants wages which you would be content with yourself, if in their place? Do you ask no more than a fair amount of labour? Or are you niggardly in pay, extortionate in the toil to be returned for it?

Christian servant! Are you faithful to your master? Or do you purloin for yourself? Are you bribed to betray him? Would you be content if God were suddenly to make you change places, that he should do to you, as you are doing to him?

Religion is an empty thing, if it does not affect your daily, and weekly life. Vainly, reader, do you call yourself a servant of God, if your morality is not far above the world's. You will find it so, when Christ stands by the scales, and your deeds are weighed at last!

13. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad the way that leads away to perdition, and many are they who enter in by it. 14. How narrow is the gate and contracted the way that leads away to life! * And few are they who find it."

This passage seems commonly to be understood, as if it were the Saviour's call to the *unconverted*

* T. Tregelles, and other critical editions.

to turn to God, and lay hold of His salvation. This is a mistake.

1. It must be so, if Jesus is now addressing disciples. The proofs of this we have seen as we went along. Disciples are already justified.

2. Is justification dependent upon our works after we believe? Are we not saved, as soon as we enter through Christ as the door? John x. 9.

To what does it refer then?

Jesus is speaking to disciples. And John had already preached to all Israel "the baptism of *repentance unto the forgiveness of sins*." Those who received aright either his baptism, or that administered by Jesus' apostles, were already accepted; and would be ready to be taught by Jesus. To these our Lord speaks.

First stands "the Gate," at the head of the way. The way cannot be entered, till we have passed through the gate. The gate signifies the principles of Jesus' doctrine. The gate stops our way. Jesus' principles require our choice. The entrance through the gate is the acceptance of them.

The gate is "strait." It is a very different word from *straight*, which means '*not crooked*.' This means '*narrow, contracted, pent-up*.' It is derived from the Latin. Our English word '*strict*' is the more modern form of it, and closer to the original.*

The Saviour is referring to His previous teaching. It was far stricter than the law of Moses. Though both the Law and the Prophets aimed at making love the law of Israel, they fell far short of it. "The Law made nothing perfect." It spoke to *Israel* alone, not to the

* I have been surprised to find it spelt '*straight*' in learned books: in the translation of Bengel's *Gnomon*, and Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*.

world. It allowed and directed law to inflict *penalty* on the offender.

While then in substance it was tending toward the level of the law of love, it did not reach it. "For the hardness of your heart, Moses wrote you this precept."

The Golden Rule of grace then, which conveys in full the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, is "the narrow gate." On another occasion he compared the severity of His requirements with a needle's eye, and the inability of the rich man to comply, with the impossibility of a camel's passing through the narrow opening. Yet that is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' doctrine in the Sermon on the Mount must be received by us, in order to enter through the gate on the way.

"The way" is the practice which results from the reception of our Lord's peculiar precepts. The gate decides the way. The way begins from the gate and streams from it up to the goal, which is either "life," or "destruction." There is no walking in the way, save by entrance at the gate. A life in accordance with Christ's commands can only spring from acknowledgment of His authority as a teacher. Hence Christianity is several times in the Acts called "the way." Saul desired "letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of *the way* [Greek], whether men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem:" Acts ix. 2. "But when certain persons were hardened, and spake evil of *the way* before the multitude, he departed from them." "Now about that time there arose no small stir about *the way*:" Acts xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 22.

The entrance at the "gate" is a momentary thing; the "way" lasts through life. The adoption of Christ's principles may be after a pause, but it takes place finally as a momentary decision. The rest of life is spent in carrying out the results in our conduct, and subduing to obedience the rising rebellion of the flesh.

Each of the two roads 'leads away' very far from the scene of entrance. And the gate which is entered, and the way in which we walk, decide the end.

Jesus then presents before us the two *gates*, the two *ways*, and the two *ends*: and would have His disciples make their choice between the two. In order to this, He lays before them the great characteristics of each.

There are a narrow gate and a broad gate: a pent-up way, and a wide way.

In these words, I suppose, Jesus is teaching His people that there would be two versions of His doctrine; two forms of it, both professing to be Christianity. He had, in principle, noticed this difference at the first division of the Sermon, when He began to compare the teachings of Moses with His own. He there warned disciples, that unless their standard rose far higher than the Decalogue, and their practice was answerable to His new instructions, they would not enter the kingdom. In that passage then, are shown in principle, both the narrow gate and the broad one.

Jesus foresaw that the Decalogue, which gives, in general, merely prohibitions of the worst forms of sin, would be taken by the great majority of Christians as their view of the principles of Jesus. Now this doctrine is far easier than the Sermon on the Mount.

It is the wide gate. Accordingly, it but little interferes with the life of sober persons of regular lives. The way is broad. It will allow them to follow the world in its various delights, as of old it permitted the Jew to do. It permits the disciple to toil after the wealth and the honours of the world. It defends his rights and property with the strong arm of the law. It enables him to make 'the best of this world,' if it does not of the age to come.

He who treads it will be far from finding himself alone. He will find no difficulty in discovering the gate. Over each parochial communion-table in the land he will see the doctrine stated. He will find multitudes from age to age taking this as their standard, and promising to obey it as their way to eternal life. "Many go in thereat." Protestants and Romanists esteem it to be discipleship; and live, some more, some less, in accordance therewith.

But the end is "destruction," or "perdition:" John xvii. 12; Rom. ix. 22.

What multitudes perish, both among Romanists and Protestants, who are owned by their neighbours as Christians, accept the standard of doctrine as taught them, and obey, as they think, 'the precepts of Christ.' They are Christians of the broad gate, and the wide road. But such easy Christianity is unsafe. Such journeying with the multitude is perilous. The end is destruction. Ask the hope of the Romanist. 'I am a Christian. I was baptized, confirmed, go to mass, receive communion, fast in Lent, confess thrice a year, and pay my priest.' This way is broad enough. It gives free scope to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. And how much is the hope of multitudes of Protestants superior? 'I was baptized,

was taught my catechism, was confirmed, go to church twice a Sunday, attend the sacrament every month, and say my prayers every night and morning.' This is a way nearly as broad as the other.

But is it the way to life? Nay, but to "destruction." 'Tis imagined discipleship, which Christ does not own. It supposes, that it is confessing Christ's precepts, and walking in His ways, while it is blind and naked.

"How strict is the gate, and contracted the way that leads away to life!"

Jesus Himself owns the extreme strictness of His teaching. Literally taken, His precepts are *very* difficult, and *impossible to nature*. There are then, two interpretations of His doctrine: (1) the *EASY*, which smooths down all roughnesses, and makes Him demand no more than the morality taught at Sinai; (2) the *DIFFICULT*, which takes His words at what they seem to mean, and asserts them to be far above the demands of the Decalogue. Which of these is the *genuine*?

Jesus' words settle the question in a moment. The broad gate is the false. The wide way misleads. No matter how great the multitudes which throng the road, it is not the more safe. Each may confirm the others that they are right, but the Lord's warning has gone forth against such a conclusion.

Much of the profession of Christianity stinks in the nostrils of even natural conscience. A man high in authority in Turkey, alluding to the Greek so-called '*Christians*' whom he knew, said to an English traveller:—

"There is one thing that puzzles me very much, that is, that you [English] should call yourselves

Christians. The fact is, you are not Christians at all : you are no more Christians than I am. You do not do the things that Christians do : you do not *cheat*, you do not *steal*, you do not *tell lies*, you do not *bear false witness*, you do not break your engagements, you do not worship pieces of wood painted yellow, in fact, there is not a particle of Christianity in you ! But I will tell you what I believe to be the truth. I believe that you English are next kin to being true believers : and God in His own good time will bring you to the knowledge of the prophet."—Christmas's *Life of Napoleon*, vol. iii. p. 131.

The *strict* gate is the *true* gate. The *contracted* way is the *right* way. 'Think you,' says the Saviour in effect, 'that I ask of you only what the unconverted and worldly can render ? I am demanding far more.' "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ?" Christ's gate is the low postern-door. It requires one to stoop, in order to enter. 'Tis the pent-up way of self-denial ; the overcoming of the lusts of the flesh ; the passive, patient endurance of ills for Christ's sake. It cuts off the pursuit of the world's pleasures, riches, honours.

Not only few of the professed followers of Christ receive this : few ever suspect their way to be wrong. They never heard of such strange doctrine. Has the letter of our Lord's teaching at any time suggested the inquiry, 'Whether He can mean, what He seems to require ?' it has been quickly silenced, either by suggestion from within, or by the voice of authority from without. But most pass by the narrow door without even observing it. Few *find* the door. Fewer still *enter* it. Some see it, and refuse it. It is

a great deal too strict for them. The fewness of the receivers then, instead of being a proof against the doctrine, is one of the grounds which discover its certain truth.

But while the road is pent-up, and contracted, the end is "life." Eternal life is the gift of God. But, for the genuine disciple of Jesus, life begins as soon as the Saviour comes. He enjoys it for a thousand years, while others are sleeping in death. And as the kingdom of heaven is the great foundation-idea of the Sermon on the Mount, so is that thought the prominent one here. The receiver of Christ's teaching, who carries it out in his life, shall enter the kingdom. Let me show you a passage or two where "life" has an especial and primary reference to the kingdom of Christ.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn [Greek], and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the *kingdom of heaven*. Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut them off, and cast them from thee : it is better for thee to enter into *life* halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : it is better for thee to enter into *life* with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire : " Matt. xviii. 3, 8, 9.

"And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into *life* maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter halt into *life*, than having two feet to be cast into hell,

into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the *kingdom of God* with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:” Mark ix. 43—47.

In the first two occurrences in this last passage we read “life,” in the third there is substituted as its equivalent, “*the kingdom of God.*”

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the *kingdom of God*, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the *kingdom of God*:” Luke xiii. 24, 28, 29.

The entrance into “life” of Matthew, in the parallel place of Luke, is entrance into the “*kingdom.*” See also Rom. v. 17; viii. 13; Gal. vi. 8.

Here, believer, Christ comes close to you—speaks to you of your standard of conduct, and your actual life. How are you living?

Are you, though a professed follower of the Saviour, and oft seated at His board, lax and loose? Are your money-dealings such as you would not wish to be known? Are you below even the rule of justice? Are you dishonest? Do you lie? Do you steal? Do you borrow and not pay? Do you break your word? Is trust committed to you only to be betrayed?

One is used to think, that every true believer must be an honest person. Alas! experience, sad and rough, oft undeceives. The Scripture supposes, that some

converted persons would yield to the flesh and the devil. There are “carnal” Christians as well as “spiritual.” Iniquity, though treasured and covered ever so secretly, is all known, and will come abroad to dread discomfiture and deep shame in the day of Christ. “If ye live after the flesh, ye are about to [Greek] *die.*” Sower to the flesh! You will “of the flesh reap corruption.” “You do wrong, and defraud, and that brethren. What? Know ye not, that unrighteous ones shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived!” “Be not deceived! God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Reader, have you entered the narrow gate? Are you a traveller in the strict road, but getting weary. Take heart, brother! The sailor, when he embarks on his unquiet element, expects to meet a storm somewhere on his voyage. The soldier, amidst the hardships of the campaign, and the wounds of battle, finds that war is oft a weariness. But he perseveres, for the sake of the gilded laurel-leaf of fame. Ours is a better crown. Ours a fame not to die away. Every day we are a march nearer home. And O, the end of our course! The joyous entry into the temple of God on high, the glad meeting with our innumerable brethren, and fellow conquerors! And the vision of our God, and the presence of the Saviour our Captain!

But let me drop a word to another class. Does this address a young man, who says in his heart, and among his companions—‘Life was given for enjoyment. Youth is life’s summer, granted for pleasure and song. It does not last, so I mean to make the most of it. None of your strait-laced ways for me! I love freedom: freedom of thought, of speech, of action! I hate your strict, formal, solemn set. No happiness, without liberty!’

It is clear, friend, which gate you prefer: and in what road you are walking! You hate singularity. You are in a heavily-laden excursion-train. Down the slope you are smoothly bowling. The jest, the laugh, the song of the many, are with you. What is the *end* of the journey? What says your excursion-ticket? 'From earth to the PIT!' Away you go! Dislike, scout, deny it as you will, your Maker, your Saviour says, You are on your way to HELL! Buoy yourself up as you will, with a sight and a sense of the thousands on your side, HE tells you that the great excursion-train in which you ride, is on its way to DESTRUCTION. Car after car tilts over its passengers down the cliff, into the sea of fire. The depth is too great for their groans to reach you. Most are shot into the fiery gulf!' 'Tis the many that are evil, the *few* that are right, the *few* that are saved. What thousands thronged the world, when Noah's voice of warning went up! But only the units listened. "*Few, few, that is, eight souls,*" escaped through the waters.

Thousands settled their houses on Sodom's smiling slopes. Bright, luxuriant, green, gay as Eden, was the plain of Gomorrha! The thousands were over-arched with canopy of fire, and encircled by the storm of fiery brimstone. The few, the few escaped.

The world is a wreck, reader: not a just-launched vessel fresh from its Maker's docks. It has beat a hole in its side, and lies upon the rocks, waiting the storm that will scatter its timbers in fragments. Is its precarious sloping deck the place for merriment, the field for the song and the dance? Is judgment coming? Will God plead with you about your words and deeds here? Is the Gospel your *only hope of escape*? Is the death of the Son of God and His forgiveness urged

upon you as your last resource? Close with it! Close at once! Dally not!

Sir J. Franklin went out with his ships to the icy North Pole, to try if, in the brief summer that scantily shines on those perilous seas and sterile coasts, he could make his way through to the open sea. 'Tis summer there! His ships, long beset, and at length locked in sheets and shackles of adamantine ice, are at length afloat. The wind, and the sun, and the tides, have broken and ground in pieces the heavy mountains and plains of ice. A way appears through the floating fragments into the open sea. His provisions are running short. Soon, how soon he knows not, his invisible foe,—the frost,—will pave,—it may be in a night,—that swelling ocean with imprisoning glaciers. Then in cold and darkness he will starve: the sun will have set for months.

He is proposing to make the most of the summer. Reindeer are seen on the hills, ptarmigan in the vales, the few flowers are out in their splendour. What say you to his spending his time there, in the pleasures of the chase? Would you not think him bereft of his senses, so to dally with his only chance of escape, to make so light of winter, that stern and pitiless jailer? If he be a fool, unpardoned reader, what are you?

God is plying you with His last appeal—the love He has shown in the death of His Son. He points to your deserts,—an endless hell of fire. He tells you of the narrow lane of waters, through which even yet, you may steer to the summer and sunshine of the city of God. Here is grace that would melt even your heart, if you would consider it. Here is terror to bow even your hardihood, if you would allow it to plead. When your last reply is returned, you heart is hardened, you will

be frozen up, for ever! You will abide in the day of judgment the consequences of your choice. Vainly will you cry then, 'Open, open,' when the gate is shut. *Within* is the joy of the ransomed, fresh, ecstatic, eternal. *Without* the scourge, the storm, the fire, the worm for ever! Flee, reader, flee while you may, the broad way and its wrath to come!

FALSE PROPHETS.

Matt. vii. 15—20.

"But beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but within they are ravening wolves. By their fruits shall ye recognize them. Do men gather from thorns grapes, or from thistles figs? Even so every good tree produceth good fruit: but the corrupt tree produceth evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits; nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruits. [Every tree not producing good fruits is cut down and cast into fire.] Wherefore by their fruits shall ye recognize them."

GIBRALTAR is England's great fortress on the southern shore of Spain. Strong by nature, it is wonderfully strengthened by art. Tier on tier of guns look forth of galleries cut out of the solid rock. Within its carefully fortified walls dwells a powerful garrison, well provisioned; and its lines are scientifically defended at all points. More than once has it been attacked by sea and land: but its enemies were unable to take it. In spite of its strength and previous successful defences, the government of this country are not careless of its foes: the commander of this valuable fort is directed to take all precautions against surprise, as though an enemy were in sight. Envy of England, and hatred of her political and religious principles by the nations of the Continent, suggest the necessity

of a constant watchfulness, that a stronghold, so important for her interests, be not wrested from her.

'Tis thus with the Church of Christ. His flock is always in danger from the wolf and bear. His fortress is in an enemy's land. 'Tis a time of warfare broken by no truce. Now by force, now by fraud, the Adversary assails her. Satan is now the roaring lion, overleaping the fold, and by brute force and fear scattering and slaying the sheep. Now he is the wily serpent, through some subterranean passage creeping in among the flock, to sting and kill in secret.

One conversant with the dangers of the position of Gibraltar might say, to the garrison and its commander: "Your chief peril lies in the nearness of the opposite lowland of Tangier. Keep your telescopes often turned in that direction. If you see any strange sail standing across the strait, shut the gates, beat to quarters, man the batteries!" Jesus then, well aware of the points from which His Church is peculiarly liable to assault, here utters the note of warning against false prophets. Let us consider—

I. THE DANGER.

II. ITS DETECTION.

I. THE DANGER arises from "false prophets."

What is a "prophet?"

1. Attempts are made in our day to lower its meaning, till it shall signify nothing more than a preacher or teacher.

2. But this is not sustained either by Scripture, heathen writers, or the Fathers. A prophet is an inspired man who discovers things hid from men. And, as the future is especially the region of that which is concealed, his vocation consists especially in

foretelling the future. Thus Hippolytus says: "Then arose just men, friends of God; these are called *prophets*, because of their foretelling the future:" p. 337. And Irenæus—"These are totally ignorant what prophecy means. *For prophecy is a proclamation of things future; that is, a foretelling of things which are to take place hereafter:*" p. 1034. Migne.

This is Peter's account of the matter. "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:*" 2 Pet. i. 21.

This is the meaning of the word in the Sermon of our Lord. It is spoken of the writers of the Scriptures. "Think not that I came to destroy the law, or *the prophets:*" Matt. v. 17. "So persecuted they the *prophets* which were before you:" ver. 12. "Lord, Lord, did we not *prophesy* in Thy name? and in Thy name *cast out demons?* and in Thy name do many wonderful works?" vii. 22.

Knowing then what a prophet is, we easily gather what is a false prophet, and what a true prophet.

A *true* prophet is one inspired by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, to foretell things to come. "Many years didst thou bear them (Israel), and testified it against them *by thy Spirit in thy prophets:*" Neh. ix. 30. "Ye do always *resist the Holy Ghost:* as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the *prophets* did not your fathers persecute?" Acts vii. 51, 52.

A *false* prophet then is one inspired by an evil spirit, and falsely, in some points, foretelling the future. In the passage just cited from Peter, the two kinds of prophets are thus contrasted. After declaring that the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit to predict the future, he adds—"But there were *false* prophets also

among the people [of Israel], even as there shall be also false teachers among you :” 2 Pet. ii. 1.

This is also John’s account of the matter. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : because many *false prophets* are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God : and this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error :” 1 John iv. 1—6.

As the prophets of the *true* Christ preceded the arrival of Messiah, so the false prophets and their spirit precede the arrival of the *false* Messiah. The false spirits who dwell in the prophet are to be interrogated concerning Christ’s coming in the flesh. These men, inspired of evil spirits, will show miracles in proof of their inspiration. “There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show *great signs and wonders*, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect :” Matt. xxiv. 24. These then are no mere teachers of errors consistent with Christianity. They are possessed by the spirit of the False Christ, and endowed with supernatural power. Such was the “*sorcerer*, the false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus.” “But Elymas the *sorcerer* with-

stood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith :” Acts xiii. 6, 7, 8. The Great False Prophet of Revelation is the chief of these. He does great miracles in public, and calls down fire from heaven. He sets up idolatry under pain of death, and gives life and speech to the statue of antichrist : Rev. xiii. ; xvi. 13 ; xix. 20.

At this point, we encounter a very frequent mistake of our day. It is commonly taken for granted, that if anything be supernatural, it is therefore of God. But there may be *inspiration* by a false spirit, as well as by the Holy Ghost. There may be a *miracle* by a spirit of Satan.

George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, was a prophet, but a false prophet. He spoke with supernatural energy and tone of voice. “But that day the Lord’s power sounded so in their ears, that they were amazed at the voice : and could not get it out of their ears for some time after, they were so reached by the Lord’s power in the steeple-house.”—*Fox’s Journal*, vol. i. p. 76.

“I went up to the steeple-house, where was a man preaching. When he had done, I was moved to speak to him and to the people in the mighty power of God, and turned them to their teacher, Christ Jesus [the light within]. The power of the Lord was so strong, that it struck a mighty dread among the people.”—*Ibid.* p. 102.

The marvellous utterances which broke forth in Irving’s congregation were from an inspiring spirit. Baxter, who was himself seized by the power, and compelled to prophecy under it, testifies to this. The prophecies given forth by the gifted persons proved untrue.

“After this scripture had been opened, the power in me passed on to a prophecy upon the state of the Church—setting out that she was ensnared by the enemy—declaring and denouncing the judgments of God, which were coming upon her and all the earth—and most fearfully warning all ministers to stand up in their places and teach these things; and declare also what had been revealed by the prophets to the Church, that within three years and a half the saints would be caught up to the Lord, and the earth wholly given up to the days of vengeance. It was emphatically declared again and again and again, that nothing but the open preaching of this revelation of the shortness of the time, would serve to awaken the Church and people from the lethargic slumber into which they were fallen. The power then passed into a prophecy of the development of the mystical Man of Sin, and of the personal Man of Sin, in the person of young Napoleon, in accordance with what is before detailed.”—*Baxter's Narrative*, pp. 62, 63.

The case of Mary Jobson is full to the point. She was possessed by a spirit. Her father and many others testify to the supernatural effects produced.

“Many nights I sat by myself, and I heard and saw fresh signs, such as loud knocks, clashing of arms, the sweetest music, and footsteps tramping, but could not see any person; large quantities of water falling on the floor before my eyes, doors were unlocked, and footsteps heard at midnight, and still no person to be seen. I was told by the voice that the child was blind, deaf, and dumb. Before this time I could not believe that there was anything supernatural.”—*Miraculous Case of Mary Jobson*, pp. 14, 15.

In the times of the Commonwealth arose men possessed by evil spirits, working signs and wonders.

“And as for John Robins, he declared himself to be God Almighty; and that he was the Judge of the Quick and of the Dead; and that he was that first Adam that was in that innocent state: and that his body had been dead this five thousand six hundred and odd years, and now he was risen again from the dead, and that he was that Adam Melchizedek that met Abraham in the way, and received tithes of him.”

“Also he said, he had raised from the dead that same Cain that killed Abel; and that he had raised that same Judas that betrayed Christ, and they now were redeemed to be happy.”—*Muggleton's Acts of the Witnesses*, p. 21.

“Also I have seen one of his prophets, that should have this power to kneel down and pray to John Robins, as unto God Almighty, with such high and heavenly expressions which was marvellous unto me to hear. Those things, and many more lying signs and wonders did he show to some; as presenting the appearance of angels, burning shining lights, half-moons and stars in chambers and thick darkness, where it was light to the phantasies of people when they covered their faces in the bed.

“They said, he presented serpents, dragons, and his head in a flame of fire, and his person riding upon the wings of the wind.

“Also his prophets had power from him to damn any that did oppose, or speak evil of him, they not knowing he was neither false nor true; for this rule he went by,—that he or she that would speak evil of things they knew not, they would as soon speak evil of a

true prophet as a false prophet."—*Muggleton's Acts of the Witnesses*, p. 22.

Of the power of a spirit which possessed G. Fox, take the following instance.

"As I was walking with several friends, I lifted up my head and saw three steeple-house spires, and they struck at my life. I asked them what place that was? They answered, Lichfield. Immediately the word of the Lord came to me that I must go thither. Being come to our journey's end, I requested my friends to walk into the house, saying nothing to them whither I was to go. And as soon as they were gone in, I slipt away, and went by my eye over hedge and ditch, till I arrived within a mile of Lichfield; where in a great field, shepherds were keeping sheep. There I was commanded of the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood still, for it was winter; and the word of the Lord was like fire in me. So I put off my shoes and left them with the shepherds, and the poor shepherds trembled and were astonished. Then I walked on about a mile, and as soon as I got within the city, the word of the Lord came to me again, saying, cry, 'Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!' So I went up and down the streets, and into the market, crying with a loud voice, 'Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield;' and no one laid hands on me. As I went thus crying through the streets, there seemed to me a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared a pool of blood. When I had declared what was on me and felt myself clear, I went out of the town in peace; and returning to the shepherds gave them some money, and took my shoes of them again. But the fire of the Lord was so in my feet, and all over me, that I did not matter to put on my shoes again,

and was at a stand whether I should or not, till I felt freedom from the Lord to do so: then, after I had washed my feet, I put on my shoes. After this a deep concern came upon me, for what reason I should be sent to cry against that city, and call it a bloody city! But afterwards I came to understand, that in the Emperor Dioclesian's time a *thousand* Christians were martyred in Lichfield! So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise a memorial of the blood of those martyrs, which had been shed about a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets." This was no call of God, but of an evil spirit: for the tradition is worth nothing, as the writer of G. Fox's life intimates.

"The two battles fought, during the siege of the close, in the civil war between Charles I. and the Parliament, took place, according to Clarendon, in 1642 and 1643, eight years prior to G. Fox's visit, and the loss of life resulting from these contests was confined to the belligerents alone. In Fuller's Church History, these thousand Christian martyrs are said to have been inhabitants of the ancient city of Verulam, now St. Alban's; and were the early converts of Saint Alban. His account states, that upon their setting out into Wales, they were pursued by their pagan townsmen and massacred not far from their own city, A.D. 303. And he treats as great improbability the account given by another writer, who makes this massacre to have taken place at a spot so far distant from St. Alban's as Lichfield."—*Popular Life of G. Fox*, p. 65. [NOTE.]

The sheep would be in especial danger from these

false prophets. They are wolves, and sheep are the natural prey of the wolves. "They come unto *you*." "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things *to draw away the disciples* [Greek] *after them*:" Acts xx. 28—30.

How are we to act towards them? "Beware of them!" Here is the difference between the law and the gospel. Under the law it was commanded, "*That prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death*, because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God:" Deut. xiii. 5. "So shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee." So also Deut. xviii. 20, 22.

Jesus next gives their ordinary characteristics. Their qualities are of two opposite classes. They come "in sheep's clothing." They wear over their shaggy wolfish hair, the fleece of the sheep. Thus only can they gain an entrance and hearing; for the sheep is a timid animal, and dreads the wolf as its deadly foe. Jesus then is describing the false prophets as bearing certain moral resemblances to His true people. False inspiration and deadly doctrine are perfectly compatible with alms, fasting, and long prayers. There may be abstinence from flesh and wine, great self-denial, and even surrender of all worldly goods. If I mistake not, this is the point of contact with the previous precept of the Lord. As if He said: 'My doctrine is indeed strict and self-denying. *But* do not esteem the strictness and self-denial of any doctrine a proof that it must be of God, or approved by Me.'

The Quakers at the outset exhibited much courage,

and endured much suffering; in some things bearing testimony to the very truth of Christ, and enduring for it violence and injustice. The Judge asked Fox, when he ought to have been discharged from prison, if he would take an oath, or not?

"Then said I, Ye have given me a book here to kiss and to swear on, and this book which ye have given me to kiss says, 'Kiss the Son,' and the Son says in this book, 'Swear not at all;' and so says also the Apostle James. Now I say as the book says, and yet ye imprison me; how chance ye do not imprison the book for saying so? How comes it that the book is at liberty amongst you, which bids me *not* swear; and yet ye imprison me for doing as the book bids me? Why don't ye imprison the book?' As I was speaking this to them, and held up the Bible open in my hand, to show them the place in the book where Christ forbids swearing, they plucked the book out of my hand again; and the judge said, 'Nay, but we will imprison George Fox.' Yet this got abroad over all the country as a by-word, that they gave me a book to swear on, that commanded me 'not to swear at all;' and that the Bible was at liberty, and I in prison for doing as the Bible said."—*Fox's Journal*, vol. ii. p. 32.

But in other points they suffered for things sinful; interrupting worship, refusing to give honour to those to whom it was due, and refusing to pay tithes.

'But if they were conscientious in this, must they not be rewarded in the Great Day?' I suppose it was to meet this inquiry, that the Holy Spirit caused the following words to be indited. "But if a man even wrestle, yet he is not crowned, except he wrestle according to the laws (of the games)." (Greek.) 2 Tim.

ii. 5. How can they be rewarded, who rejected the first principles of the Gospel—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, and the Resurrection ?

The false prophets will talk of love, liberty, peace, unity, and brotherly-kindness. Many will imagine that their words must bespeak a heart of goodness. The want of self-denial, and the prevalence of entire self-indulgence, will give great vantage-ground to a religion, which manifestly masters some of the common appetites and tendencies of man, and puts on the semblance of humility and liberality. Men will be ready to say—‘ Would not the world be regenerate indeed, if its inhabitants were such as these ? ’

No ! “ Inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

Each sheep must wear the sheep’s wool : but the wearing of the woolly fleece does not make a sheep. Thus these false prophets put on the appearance of holiness, in order to deceive. The heart within is wholly unlike the semblance without.

1. They are covetous. The spirit of covetousness is rapacious and unscrupulous : and this is one of the strong tendencies of false doctrine : 2 Pet. ii. 3, 14.

2. They are persecuting and bloodthirsty. The wolf comes to destroy : John x.

In our own land at this moment, is a religion professedly derived from angels. It utters many fair speeches about the blessed results that will proceed from its adoption. It inculcates the giving up of wealth to feed the necessitous. But how fierce is its resistance to all authority, and how ready for violence and bloodshed, let these passages prove !

“ Now, therefore, declare to the world that the age of superstition and ignorance is fast passing away ;

when the true ministers of the Church shall be endowed with the gifts which Christ bestowed on His true followers. So that the comfort of the mind, the healing of the body, and the salvation of the soul, shall be entrusted to those who willingly sacrifice self-interest for the promotion and glory of God ; and that all creatures can embrace the true doctrines of Christianity, as laid down by Christ Himself ; and then all classes of society will enjoy that happiness, which now, through the ambitious and self-exalted power of the rulers of the Church, they are deprived of ; and thus end the oppression to which all classes are subjected, through *mystical horrors* as represented beyond the grave to be of everlasting duration. For the time is coming, when these thoughts will be erased from the minds of man, and the true Church of Christ with all its glory, arising from pure, holy, and untainted religion established by Christ Himself, shall shine forth henceforward and for ever.”—*Spiritual Message*, p. 222.

“ And he who needeth, and taketh from him who hoardeth that which is not his lawful rights, doth not commit sin in the sight of God.”—*Spiritual Message*, p. 234.

We come to the second point :—

II. THEIR DETECTION.

How shall we detect these masked ones ? Their outside is fair : the part amiss in them is beyond human sight. How shall we know them and keep out of their reach ? To warn us, without giving us a test, would be only to raise useless doubt, and fear ; and would introduce separation among believers who should be united by full confidence in each other.

Our Lord therefore gives us a token whereby to discover these dangerous persons.

1. And first, He gives not *official* marks. It is not a something which can be decided by ecclesiastical canons. It cannot be settled by satisfactory answers to the inquiries—‘Were you regularly ordained? Have you part in the unbroken succession from the apostles? Will you show us your letters of orders?’

2. “Ye shall know them by their *fruits*.” The test is a spiritual one. God at the first established certain natures, vegetable and animal. These retain their character from age to age unchanged. Jesus had compared His people and these deceivers to animals greatly differing in their nature, as sheep and wolves. He now takes His illustration from the vegetable creation.

The fruit or seed is the great end to which the whole powers of the tree are made to tend and to contribute. The root, the stem, the branches, the bark, the leaves, the flowers, are all working with a view to produce the seed or fruit. That fruit is characteristic of that kind of tree. It cannot be found on a tree of any other kind. It continues the same in every climate, on every soil, through every kind of season; whether the year be wet or dry, hot or cold. Such is the constancy of nature, that this rule is never broken.* Know the *tree*, and, even in winter, you can foretell its next summer’s fruit: aye, and tell all the crops it has ever borne. Know the *fruit*, and you know the tree. Is the fruit poisonous? So is the tree. Is the fruit wholesome and pleasant? Of a like character are the leaves, and the sap.

* We are not speaking of *grafted trees*: but of trees such as they are found in nature.

Now as men argue with confidence from the character of the fruit to the character of the tree; so may you, from the words and actions of these teachers and their disciples, to their spirit within. As the grape will not grow on any stem, or spring from any sap but that of the vine; so true love, humility, meekness, reverence, truth, purity, faith, will only be found in the heart renewed by the Spirit of God, and holding the doctrines of the Christ. For it is not naked doctrine which renews the soul, but the Spirit that wields it. Observe then these teachers’ lives. Try them by their deeds. Notice their words. Estimate thereby their spirit.

Professions, ceremonies, words, forms, may deceive. But the words and actions taken together, will discover the state of the spirit.

Before God, there are but two great classes, and those are arranged according to their natures. In every man there is either the fallen nature derived from Adam; or there is the renewed nature. Scripture calls the one “the flesh;” the other “the spirit.”

Now the moral differences of these natures are very apparent. “The works of the FLESH are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:” Gal. v. 19—21.

On the other hand, “The fruit of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law:” ver. 22, 23.

Now the evil spirits are the authors of the *false inspiration* and *false doctrine* of the false prophets. And they leave the man’s nature unrenewed. They

find him in "the flesh;" and in the flesh he continues while under their inspiration. Not only they do not improve it, but they stimulate it to yet greater evil: sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another.

But the Holy Ghost is the Great Author of *true Prophecy*. He delivers true doctrines concerning God and man, foresees the future clearly, and instructs His prophets truly to predict it. But not only so. His almighty power extends to the *nature of man*, as well as to the *foresight of events*; and hence He gives life to the soul spiritually dead, and bestows a better nature. And from that renewed nature spring the fruits of grace. They are possible, only because of the renewed nature. And the renewed nature must needs receive all essential points of Christ's doctrine.

These false prophets then, and their followers, must ever wear a cloak with a wide rent, enabling a careful eye to see the pistols, the dagger, and dark lantern underneath.

And the Spirit of God has condescended to point out to us some of those points at which, in spite of all their caution, the old nature peeps out.

1. They speak of the world, and are received by the worldly, while the teachers of Christ's truths are despised and cast out: 1 John iv. 5; Luke vi. 26. And he who loves the world, cannot love the Father: John ii. 15. Victory over the world is the result of the Spirit's renewal.

2. As love is the fruit of the Spirit, so is hatred the fruit of the flesh. The enmity, which God set at the first between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, abides still. It is a never-failing test. To this John appeals. There were errorists in his day;

men inspired by the spirit of Antichrist, and teaching doctrines subversive of Christianity. How were the Christians to know whether such were of God, or not? They professed to know God and have full fellowship with Him, to be free from sin, rejoicing in His smile, sent by Him to lead all into His truth. *How?* By noting their acts. Their heart responded not to the love of Christ's people. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even till now:" 1 John ii. 9. "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Of this Cain was the example. He was a religious man, seemingly more gentle than Abel; for he would not take the life of a dumb creature. But his religion was of the flesh alone: and its awful propensities speedily burst forth in all their black colours. This worshipper can rear himself up proudly in the presence of Jehovah, and lie; and murder his brother!

Covetousness, lasciviousness, a pride which refuses to stoop to lawful authority, but launches out in reproaches and fierce charges, are other features given by the Holy Spirit: 2 Pet. ii.

Now these teachings of our Lord have received, in days past, the most complete fulfilment. We have seen that inspiration and supernatural agency were attached to doctrines utterly subversive of the truth. But the unchanged tempers of the old nature looked out through all.

George Fox and his prophets went into churches and interrupted ministers, railing at them.

"Now as I went towards Nottingham on a first day in the morning, with friends to a meeting there, when I came on the top of a hill in sight of the town, I espied the great steeple-house; and the Lord said unto me,

'Thou must go cry against yonder great idol, and against the worshippers therein.' I said nothing of this to the friends that were with me, but went on with them to the meeting, where the mighty power of the Lord was amongst us; in which I left friends sitting in the meeting, and I went away to the steeple-house. When I came there all the people looked like fallow ground, and the priest (like a great lump of earth) stood in his pulpit above. He took for his text these words of Peter: 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.' And he told the people that this was the Scriptures, by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions. Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say: 'O no, it is not the Scriptures!'"—*Fox's Journal*, vol. i. p. 75; also pp. 252, 308, 334.

A specimen of their railing is given by Baxter.

"If the Lord bless you with outward creatures, and you bestow them upon *Baal's priests*, He may justly require the outward things from you again, which He hath given you: Who saith, that His ministers should freely give as they have freely received. So all the preachers for tithe and money, and the takers and payers of tithe, must be testified against in the Lord's power and spirit: that all may stand up in their testimony for Jesus Christ, in His power and spirit against the *tithemongers*."—*Fox's Journal*, vol. ii. p. 173.

They blasphemed, by making themselves equal with God (see Leslie's Works, vol. ii. pp. 486, 508, 516, &c.).

They would not own any but themselves to be Christians (*Fox's Journal*, vol. i. p. 284).

They were guilty of deceit (Leslie, vol. ii. pp. 368, 525, &c.).

They refused to bow to civil authorities.

As then the fruit decides the tree, so do the actions of such discover them to be false prophets. As easily as the blackberry-bush covered with its fruit can be distinguished from the vine, or the thistle from the fig-tree, so easily may the true teacher and the truly inspired of the Spirit of God, be discerned from the false teacher, and from those inspired by evil spirits.*

This principle of our Lord holds good both positively, and negatively. These characteristics of good and evil, do not so overlap one another, that it may be said truly—that 'the truth lies between the extremes.' The bramble bush does not sometimes, in a favourable season, bear grapes. The fig-tree, never, in the most unfavorable season, bears thistle-down.

Observe then, reader, that *each* believer, even the youngest and weakest (and not Church officers only), is to notice the difference between the two natures of the flesh and the spirit, as exemplified in these False Prophets.

The flesh acted on by Satan's spirit, and the renewed spirit of man acted on by the Holy Ghost, produce such opposite results, as to be visible to every spiritual eye, however lately couched and little exercised.

Again, the principle of private judgment denied

* In the case of inspiration manifesting itself in the Church of Christ,—instant tests are given. Enquiry is to be made of the inspiring spirit,—'Whether Jesus is Lord?' and, 'Whether Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?' 1 Cor. xii. ; 1 John iv. 1—8.

by the Romanist, is here asserted. Also by 1 John iii. 7, 10.

Jesus' word of warning is not in vain. Especially in latter days will its force be seen. At times men have arisen boasting new discoveries of truth, and trying experiments with their fellows for their own glorification. They have found out, as they fancied, that the evils of the world are owing only to some cause which lies on the surface.

1. In the time of the French Revolution it was imagined and asserted by some, that all evil sprang out of the artificial state of things produced by civilized society. 'Return to nature!' was the cry, 'and all will be well! Look at savage life, see its peaceful repose, truthfulness, happiness. No law, drunkenness, ambition, bribery!' Missionaries had not then gone abroad, to lift the veil off the savage nations of the globe. The painter could depict the far-off figure as the goddess of beauty and happiness. He could declare, that the landscape beyond the horizon was full of loveliness. But the missionary with his matter-of-fact journals, has raised the curtain, and shown us the heathen when left to nature, as the prey of every evil, the perpetrator of every crime, foul in habits and in dress, the savage murderer of his fellow, the cannibal, the worshipper with abominable rites of gods which his own hands have made.

2. 'Government is at fault,' said the French philosopher. 'Give liberty from tyrants, proclaim the reign of reason, and all will be well.' That was tried, and the issue was Atheism. Maddened by vain conceits, man became a god to himself, and his brother's blood flowed as a torrent. Terror brooded over every household, and suspicion was reason enough to destroy.

3. 'Education and institutions are in fault,' said the author of the *New Moral World*. Give him scope, and he would restore happiness and virtue to those who were willing to obey. 'That sombre book, the Bible, had destroyed man's *confidence in himself*.' How has that experiment ended? In failure!

Imagine a man arriving at the conclusion, that the savageness of wild beasts was only the result of bad education and example; and setting to work to realize his theory. He collects crocodiles and tigers, bears and lions, panthers, wolves, asps and rattlesnakes, and pens them together. What will be the issue? Will he educate the serpent to lay aside his poison and eat grain? Will he induce the lion to give up flesh, and content himself with straw? Will he, by bringing them into contact, induce them to love each other? Or would not the fierce congregation begin to fight and prey on itself, and the strongest tear in pieces the weakest, till perhaps the lion only remained, torn by the conflict, and dying beneath the sting of the rattlesnake? The schemer might well be thankful, if he escaped being devoured by the creatures he sought to tame.

The failure of all these systems arises from their ignorance, and from the denial of the *depth* of human ruin.

Jesus foretells a greater, deadlier outbreak of this error of unbelief: a fraud calculated to lead "disciples" astray. Be prepared then! This caution is a *practical* thing. Here many fail. Most judge the sermon as to whether *it pleases them* or not; not as a truth given to carry home and apply.

Suppose a lecture on the compass, given to seamen, each of whom is to go out to sea. But imagine them

not taking home the compass, but criticising the outside and ornaments of the case. Like that is the conduct of most. This truth is an anchor, not to admire, and leave on the shore, while you put to sea without it. 'Tis to be *used*, aye, in a storm: to be carried with you chained to your ship, ready to loose from the hawser-hole, whenever needed.

How ought we to act, should such deadly doctrines spring up in our neighbourhood?

(1) To *punish* and *destroy* the author? No! That is God's work.

(2) Shall we patronize it? Lead others to it? Say the best we can in its behalf? Admire the intellect, and oratory of the promoters?

(3) Nay: but to "*beware*." To keep aloof, to warn others. "To flee the voice of strangers." This is the sheep's duty, as taught by Christ. 'Tis a hurtful system, and we are to seek to escape its hurt. It leads away from Christ and would destroy. The promoters of the evil are cautioned of its doom. So Lot was warned of Sodom's.

Let us learn herefrom the limit of charity. What is of Christ, and tends to build up in Him, promote. Seek to bless, and encircle in the arms of charity, all Christ's people. But discriminate between the (1) FRIENDS of God and His (2) ENEMIES. What puts away and denies Him and His word, we are to reject, denounce, flee from! No matter though some should cry, 'Uncharitable!' What says Jesus of some? They are "*ravening wolves*." 'How uncharitable!' in the eyes of many of our day. They for their part would embrace *all* opinions in one universal brotherhood! Let not us, reader, be seduced by any such vain imagination. Many are full of unbelief, unreconciled

to God, living in sins on which the wrath of God abides.

Learn wisdom from Christ. Here is a father taking his children round a menagerie. "What is that, father?" "A ringdove, my boy." "Give it some of the crumbs of your bun." "What is that beautiful bird, with the shield of sparkling feathers?" "'Tis a golden pheasant." "Go as near to its cage as you please. Give it, too, some of your bun. 'Tis so tame. it will eat of your hand." "What is that elegant creature, with the coat of mail?" "A rattlesnake, my boy. Keep as far aloof as possible. If it touch you, it would sting you to death." 'O father, how uncharitable you are, to think and to teach, that there is any such great difference between a ringdove and a rattlesnake! How sad of you to instil such prejudices into the youthful mind!' 'Tis a wise prejudice that preserves a son's life! Better that, than the *charity*, which for want of warning, leaves him to be bitten and die.

Be charitable, Christian, as far as Christ bids you. Here is a Wesleyan. 'Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?' 'I do.' 'Here are my hand and my heart.' 'That is a Moravian.' 'Do you trust in the atoning blood of the Son of God?' 'I do.' 'Brother, you are welcome! We shall meet around the throne of God!' 'This is a Unitarian!' 'No hand of fellowship from me! Poor man! There is no salvation for you in your present unbelief!' Be *uncharitable with Christ*, believers! Charity has its field, a wide one. It is broad enough to embrace all the renewed and believers.

But are ANTICHRISTS to be smiled on, or patronized? 'Receive him not into thy house, or bid God speed!' 2 John. The near approach to this antichristian

doctrine is found in our day, in extreme (1) Teetotalism, which must needs frown on the Lord's Supper, and so overturns the Scripture.* (2) Vegetarianism, which denies God's grant of animals for food. (3) Spiritism, or the followers (specially in America) of the spirit-rappers, with mediums, writing mediums, etc. When men at length are *inspired* of evil spirits, the full mischief is come.

How much is amiss with man? Most admit, that not *all* is right. Few will say, that man is without evil. But on the question, 'How much is wrong?' there is much difference.

The deeper the cause of the evil lies, the greater and more searching the need of the remedy.

You my reader—what think you of the amount of evil in *yourself*? Are you *guiltless*?

No! *Sometimes*, as you confess, you go a little out of the way. When much provoked you get a little out of temper, and may utter an oath now and then. When the truth would expose you to much inconvenience, you do now and then tell a fib. When much pressed by jovial companions, you have occasionally taken a glass too much.

But then the fault is in '*circumstances*.' 'A man can't always be on his guard. Such is the state of society now-a-days, and such *your peculiar* temptations, that it can't be expected, that you never should take one step aside!'

In short, you believe, that while you are right in the main, right at *heart*, there are occasional deviations only. You are steering right enough for heaven, but so heavy are the waves, so strong the squalls, that if

* This is not said of individual teetotallers, many of whom are believers: but of the doctrine.

the steersman's eye be but off for a moment, the vessel's head will be for an instant off the proper course. Only for an instant, however,—'tis immediately put on the right course again. And what captain would be severe on such momentary deviation of the helmsman?

Now friend, do you not perceive that your thoughts about yourself, and Christ's teaching, are not only different, but *opposite*?

You look on sin, as one might on a man's rubbing off the skin from the hand, when carrying in a heavy package into a house. You admit the bruise, but 'tis a very trifle. Jesus speaks of it as a deep-seated disease. According to Jesus' words 'tis not from *without* that sin comes, but from *within*. 'Tis in the *blood*. 'Tis not only now and then, but *always*. 'Tis not a transient visitor; 'tis the regular tenant and householder.

Else why does He compare you to a tree? The tree is a *whole*. It is a vegetable system, working on year by year to the production of its fruit. The whole tree contributes to it—root, stem, branches, bark, leaves, blossoms. It is one whole of the same quality throughout. If the *fruit* is poisonous, so are the stem, the *branches*, the *sap*! If the fruit is wholesome, the tree is not poisonous. We argue with confidence from the part to the whole.

You show me a fruit. 'Tis the fruit of the Upas of Java. I taste it. It makes me terribly ill. I need not see the tree. I know that its sap is poisonous, its wood is so too. 'Tis a poisonous **TREE!**

I argue from that *one* specimen of the fruit which you show me, to *all*. Every fruit off that tree is of like quality. Touch it not, as you value your life!

I argue from that *one tree to all its kind*. If while travelling in England, I saw the same description of fruit on any tree, I should say—‘That is a Upas tree. I know it by the fruit. Grow where it may, in the tropics, or in the snows, it is poisonous.’ This is reason, is it not?

Now Jesus says, that this holds good of *man*.

You told a lie.

You admit that that one act is not right.

Well, see the consequences.

That act is a fruit of your tree. If one fruit be a sloe, all the fruit that you ever bear, or ever will bear by nature, are only the harsh, sour, bitter sloes! *All your acts are evil*.

From the *act* I argue to the *nature*: from the fruit the tree. Then you are a blackthorn. Your root, stem, *sap*, are wrong too.

To say, ‘I admit that act was evil, but my heart is good,’ is not only absurd, but a contradiction to Christ. It is to say, ‘This fruit is a sloe, but the tree on which it grew is a vine.’ No! If the tree be good, it cannot bring forth evil fruit. If this act is evil, your heart is evil. All your ways and nature are so. And till changed, your evil tree never has borne good fruit, never will bear it. You will never renew yourself.

You are not wrong at one or two particular moments when committing sin, getting right again the minute after. You were predisposed to the sin before you committed it. That tendency, that inclination has gained strength by the act. You are always wrong, wrong in every part. Sin circulates, like the sap, through every part. The blackthorn is the blackthorn all the year round, when stripped of leaf and fruit in

winter, as truly as when clothed with bloom in spring, or with fruit in autumn.

Cut out a thin slice of the wood of the vine, and put it under a powerful microscope. You would see the peculiar arrangement of the vessels which produces the grape. Take a portion of its sap, and analyse it by a perfect chemistry, and you would see in it the necessary ingredients to the formation of the grape juice.

Take now a slice of the blackthorn, and you would see in the light of the microscope so different an arrangement of the vessels, that you would say at once—‘If the former be the form necessary for making grapes, this can never produce them.’ And take some of the sap in like manner, and the analyst would say, ‘This can never produce grapes: hard, astringent, bitter as it is!’ Then, friend, remember! As the tree bears but *one* kind of fruit, if you decide on *any one specimen*, that it is of an evil kind, you decide on all the crop from *that tree*, and from *all the trees of a like kind*, that they are evil.

Is it so? Is this the representation of the Saviour? Is this the declaration of the Creator, Who knows what is in man? Are you wholly evil? Evil in thought, as well as deed? Evil *always*, and not only *occasionally*? Will you be evil *for ever*, if you are not renewed? Is your nature evil? Only confirmed in sin, and getting worse and worse, the longer you live? Has the Bible done you no good, but only given you greater light, so that your sin is worse now, than if you had never seen it? Has the preaching of Christ, the Son of God, instead of changing you, left you worse than before, because you sin against greater light?

Then how hopeless is your case, except God take it

up! *The tree is evil!* Evil fruit, evil tree! Who but God can change a *nature*?

Yes? God says, that so evil are you, that nothing but your being begotten from above will save you. Nothing but that will make you fit for heaven. No man *has ever* changed himself from evil to good. No one ever *will*. Adam changed himself from *good to evil*, for the round stone rolls easily down the steep. But he did not right himself after the fall. Nor have his children recovered themselves. You may have seen stones on a cliff's seaward side roll down one after another. But who ever saw them roll themselves *up* the cliff?

But while it is said, "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit," it is *not* said, 'that an evil tree cannot be *made* good.' That is in God's *power*. Many are witnesses of it. Whether He will do it, depends on His good pleasure. The rebel has no claim.

But what if you continue as you are? What if you die unchanged? Then read your doom in man's ordinary treatment of a useless tree.

Woe to the barren, woe to the evil tree! It must be felled, and cast into the fire.

A man bitterly hostile to religion, the opposer of his godly wife, one Sunday morning took his axe on his shoulder, and went off to the forest to fell wood. Casting his eye around to see where he should begin, he saw a tree dead and dry, lifting its leafless limbs high in air. He said to himself: 'That's the tree! 'Tis dead and dry, only fit to burn.' Then suddenly the thought struck him: 'And you! what are you, but a dead tree, fit only to burn?'

The thought was unpleasant, and he tried to get rid of it. But God had shot the arrow too deeply into his

soul. He struck a few blows on its trunk, but the thought of his resemblance to the tree only pierced the more deeply. He was displeased at the intruding conviction. He plied his axe with increasing force: but the arrow lodged only the deeper. Was not he spiritually dead? Was not felling and burning his just doom?

He could bear it no longer. He shouldered his axe, went home, fell on his knees in his chamber, and cried for mercy. He asked forgiveness through atoning blood, and found the peace he sought. He is a dead tree no longer. Go, unconverted reader, and do likewise!

REQUISITES FOR
ENTERING THE KINGDOM.

Matt. vii. 21—23.

21. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father Who is in heaven.

22. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out demons? and in Thy name do many wonderful works? 23. And then will I confess to them, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness.'"

THE greatness of the Lord Jesus here appears. He here not only teaches who shall enter the kingdom, but indirectly assumes, that with Himself lies the power to admit or reject any.

Throughout the Sermon, no description is given of the kingdom: for it is supposed to be already foretold, and foreknown by the parties addressed. It was so; 'twas the reign of Messiah predicted by the Jewish prophets. Of it the Transfiguration gave a sketch. Here it is supposed to appear after life is over, and the actions of each are complete. Judgment

precedes it. 'Tis no admission by *man* of a disciple into the Church, that his light may shine on the candlestick. 'Tis admission or exclusion by Christ at His advent, after the period of trial is past, and according to the works done in the flesh.

We may consider the subject in two points of view—

I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ADMISSION OR EXCLUSION.

II. THE PARTICULAR CASE OF EXCLUSION.

First, then, THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

There are two requisites necessary for entering the kingdom.

1. *The confession of Christ's Lordship.*

This was the great question then pending between Jesus and the Jew. Was He the Messiah, the Son of David? Was He the Prophet like Moses, to whom they were to listen? The body of the nation decided that He was *not*. To confess Him to be so, was enough to put a man out of the synagogue: John ix.

But the Holy Spirit testified to Jesus as Lord. It was the testimony of Peter in the first Sermon at Pentecost. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God made this Jesus whom ye crucified both *Lord* and Christ:" Acts ii. 36. He is the Son of man of whom it is written—"Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet:" Psa. viii.; Heb. ii. 8. "Every tongue is to confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father:" Phil. ii. 11. This is required in order to salvation: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth *the Lord Jesus*, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:" Rom. x. 9. Without this there would be no calling on His name. But that is the great condition of salvation, propounded

by Joel, and asserted by both Peter and Paul. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of *the Lord*, shall be saved:" Rom. x. 13; Acts ii.; Joel ii.*

This then is the first requisite.

For want of it, the unbelieving Jews would be excluded. They were Moses' disciples, and would not own this man, about whose origin they knew nought. Therefore, when Jesus' Lordship manifestly shines forth in His millennial kingdom, these cannot enter. They have all along denied the sovereign of the kingdom. Jesus, therefore, when He praises the centurion's faith in Himself as Lord, adds, that such believing Gentiles should enter, while "the children of the kingdom [the Jews] should be cast out into the outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:" Matt. viii. 12. They will be dealt with as enemies. "Those *Mine enemies* who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me:" Luke xix.

This first condition then excludes from the kingdom *all unbelievers*, whether Jew, Mahomedan, or Heathen. The heathen knows not of Christ. The Mahomedan denies Him to be equal to Mahomet. The Jew refuses Him.

But this first requisite, though good as far as it goes, is not sufficient. There must be beside obedience to the statutes of Jesus. Here is the *second* condition. "He that *doeth the will* of My Father Who is in heaven." In the opening of the Sermon, and now

* Many find a difficulty in 1 Cor. xiii. 2. 'None can say *Jesus is Lord*, but by the Holy Ghost.' But Paul is there speaking of *inspired men* (των πνευματικων) only. And he declares, that no *false spirit* inspiring a man will make that confession, while the Holy Spirit in the Prophet would.

at the close, Jesus discloses to us who are to enter that age and state of reward. All-important to us is this part of the subject. The will of the Heavenly Father is made known in these words of the Son. He spake as the Father would have Him: "This is my beloved Son: *hear Him*." The Father's will is presently after called by our Lord, "these sayings of *mine*."

In order to enter the millennial kingdom then, there must be **GOOD WORKS**:—there must be obedience to the special commands of Jesus, as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. Of course there will be no such obedience, where His Lordship is not owned. But there may be an owning of His authority, where obedience is not rendered. Alas! 'tis common enough! Jesus foresaw that many would admire His words, confess His doctrines to be very beautiful, but consider them as impossible to be carried out into practice. He therefore thus reproves it. "But why call ye *Me, Lord, Lord*, and do not the things which I say?" Luke vi. 46.

From this second condition it may clearly be proved, that "*the kingdom of heaven*" is a different thing from "*eternal life*." For without works faith justifies us, and brings us eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son **HATH everlasting life**:" John iii. 36. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, **HATH everlasting life**:" John v. 24. It is a gift, possessed at once upon faith. But of *that* Jesus is not speaking now. Addressing Himself to those *already justified by faith*, and therefore His disciples, He is claiming *the works of obedience*, and annexing to them *special reward*. Eternal life is not reward: the kingdom is: Rev. xi. 15, 18.

Faith in Jesus as Lord, and confession of Him as

such, are enough for salvation; as we have seen: Rom. x. Both are implied in the calling Christ 'Lord.' But something more is here required. *That which is enough to introduce to eternal life, is not enough for the kingdom.* The entrance into that is "according to works." Here therefore works are required.

The result of this second condition is, the shutting out from the kingdom a great portion of those who profess to belong to Christ. It excludes also, not a few of those who really believe to the saving of the soul.

We have arrived now at the

II. PARTICULAR CASE OF EXCLUSION.

And here notice—I. The culprit's plea for admission.
II. The Judge's sentence of exclusion.

I. The Plea. Jesus takes the case of those who have confessed His Lordship during their life on earth; who do confess it to His face, when they appear before Him as the King at the judgment day. "Many will say unto Me in that day, *Lord, Lord.*"

Of what "day" does the Saviour speak?

The day of the kingdom, when entrance into it will be the great question: Matt. vii. 21. Scripture speaks especially of two days. The present age, or "*Man's day*:" 1 Cor. iv. 3. The coming one is "the Day of God," or "the Great and Terrible day of *the Lord*:" Acts ii. 20, etc.

The principles of these two days are different. The present age is of *mercy*. "Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation." But the age to come, or the day of the Lord, is "the day of judgment," that is, 'the day of *justice*.'

Hence the one is called "*this day*," or "*to-day*:" Heb. iii. The future age is called "*that day*."

"*That day*," is a key-note running through the prophets. "The Lord alone shall be exalted *in that day*. For the *day of the Lord* shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty:" Isa. ii. 11, 12.

It is the day in which God will give repentance to Israel, and to Jerusalem, and they shall look on pierced Messiah and mourn: Zech. xii. 9—14. "In that day" idols shall be cut off from the earth, and evil spirits shall be cast out of it: xiii. 2. The Lord shall destroy the Gentile besiegers of Jerusalem, and Himself appear. "His feet shall stand *in that day* on the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east." "And the Lord shall be KING over all the earth; *in that day* there shall be one Lord, and His name One:" Zech. xiv. 1—9.

By the same expression is it referred to in the New Testament. "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against *that day*:" 2 Tim. i. 12. "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in *that day*: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well:" ver. 18. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at *that day*: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing:" iv. 8.

We return to the plea of the parties before us.

They urge, that they have confessed the name of Jesus prominently, and powerfully. They have done so in three ways; all of them commanding the utmost attention; for all suppose the exercise of supernatural power.

1. "Did we not in Thy name prophesy?"

This does not mean "preach:" though many, seeing

that prophecy has not abode in the Church, would crush the word till it mean that only.

It signifies the foretelling of the future, as I have before showed. But there is proof also arising from the passage before us. Prophecy here stands connected with two other kinds of miraculous agency: the casting out of demons, and the working of miracles. There ought therefore to be no question, that the word here is spoken of inspiration. False Prophets precede the coming of the kingdom, as Jesus had foretold; but these predict the truth, by the Spirit of God. They are possessed of the Spirit of Christ, as the false prophets are by the Spirit of the False Christ, or Antichrist. As the false prophet spoke in the name of another Christ, so did these in the name of the true. But the kingdom is the great burthen of prophecy—the great beacon-light to which, amidst the darkness, the eyes of the faithful are to be turned.

2. They plead again, "In Thy name we cast out demons."

This, of course, is by supernatural power. It supposes evil spirits to be upon earth and active, up to the days of the kingdom. This power is a promise given to disciples or believers. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they *cast out demons*; 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:" Mark xvi. 17, 18.

The ejection of demons had an immediate reference to the kingdom. When Jesus sends forth the Seventy, He bids them—"Heal the sick that are therein [in each city], and say unto them, *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you*:" Luke x. 9. "And the seventy

returned again with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through Thy name.' And He said unto them, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven:'" ver. 17, 18.

The ejection of Satan, the Prince of Demons, is necessary, in order to the coming of the kingdom of Christ: Rev. xx. 1—3; Zech. xiii. 2. And Jesus testifies to the Jews who cavilled, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the *kingdom of God is come on you before you expected*" (εφθασεν): Matt. xii. 28. It was a specimen, not to be mistaken, of the future defeat and imprisonment of the Great Adversary. The casting out of evil spirits then from the persons of men by the name of Christ, was glorifying to Him. It was work done towards convincing men of Jesus' Lordship, and of the future kingdom.

3. They had "in His name done many wonderful works."

The word translated "wonderful works," is sometimes rendered "miracles." It means something supernatural, such as the walking on the water, the turning water into wine, and raising the dead: Matt. xi. 20.

These were signs of the kingdom,—“powers of the age to come:” Heb. vi. 5. They were of old closely linked on to preaching the good news of the kingdom. “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:” Matt. iv. 23. “And Jesus 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:” ix. 35. “And as ye go, preach, saying, *The*

kingdom of heaven is at hand. *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give:*" x. 7, 8.

When Philip went to Samaria, he preached "concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." With this were joined many "miracles," aweing even Simon the magician: Acts viii. 6, 7, 13.

"In Thy name." Jesus is comparing His precepts with the law. What use does the law make of that phrase?

The phrase is only used of prophets, and of the authority of some god. (1) "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. . . . But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die:" Deut. xviii. 18, 20. (2) "Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land:" Dan. ix. 6. (3) "Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek Thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand." (4) "Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in My name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be

consumed:" Jer. xi. 21; xiv. 14, 15; xxiii. 25; xxvii. 9, 15.

The plea then of the speakers is seemingly very strong.

The millennial kingdom is designed for those that own the name of Christ, and glorify it upon earth. 'We have so owned it, we have glorified it. We were possessed of the Spirit of God, and did all our acts of supernatural power, in Thy name. We foretold this Thy glory, and brought men to believe in it. Suffer us then, O King, to partake of Thy glory.'

'We promoted this day of Thy power by dispossessing evil spirits, and so proving to men the great promised binding of Satan during the thousand years. We wrought with Thee, Lord, and for Thee: Let us enter, we beseech Thee!'

'We wrought works of power beyond man's. We gave Thee all the glory of these miracles. We confessed it Thy power. By Thy Spirit we healed the sick. We raised the dead in proof of the First Resurrection, and the awaking of Thy people at the thousand years.'

'As "*fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God*" with Thyself, bid us enter into thy millennial joy: Col. iv. 11. Thou countest those worthy of the kingdom who suffer for it: 2 Thess. i. 5. Count us worthy of the kingdom, who wrought for it, with Thy Spirit, and in Thy name! Ought we not, as manifest *doers of God's will*, to enter?'

Observe here, the silent proofs of Jesus' Godhead.

He represents Himself as the Judge of men. But who can judge men, save He who knows both their secret actions, and all their lives, and can read their hearts? And who can do so but God?

What is the *Saviour's answer* to the appeal?

"And then will I confess unto them."

The word "confess" sounds rather strangely. But it is full of force. It has a tacit reference to other sayings of Christ.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven : " Matt. x. 32.

"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God : " Luke xii. 8.

On this they take their stand. They had confessed the name of Christ on earth. They had acknowledged His future glory as their hope. Must He not therefore own their names, and admit them into that kingdom, of which they had been such eminent witnesses ?

But Jesus, impelled by a sense of duty, and by the force of the principles of the kingdom, would refuse their plea. He will tell them plainly,—

"I never knew you."

The statements on which their plea for entrance is founded, Jesus does not deny. They were true. But He will not own them as His servants. Jesus never approved them ; never confessed them as His. From this, I suppose, it follows, that these are unconverted men. Their acts of power could only have been done by power from Himself. "But if any have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His : " Rom. viii. If they were Christ's, He must have known them. "I am the Good Shepherd, and *know My sheep*, and am known of Mine : " John x. 14 ; 2 Tim. ii. 19 ; Gal. iv. 9.

From the particulars of this case I gather, that they are Jewish disciples of Jesus, who arise after the Church is rejected. For, as far as we learn, no person who was not truly a believer in Jesus received the

supernatural gifts, after the Church began to exist on the day of Pentecost. Simon the magician was near to receiving them ; but was refused, as having no part or lot in the matter, because his heart was not right in the sight of God : Acts viii.

The unbelieving sons of Sceva the Jew used the name of Christ in exorcism, but did not prevail over the spirit ; on the contrary, the evil spirit prevailed against them : Acts xix.

But the gifts of miracle and inspiration will be again bestowed specially on believers of Israel, when the gospel of the kingdom is sent forth, just before the end comes : Matt. xxiv. 14. It is of some of these then, I believe, that our Lord is speaking.

Observe next :—

II. The Judge's decision.

What is our Lord's sentence ?

"Depart from Me, ye workers of lawlessness."

To those who are to enter the kingdom, Jesus says, "*Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom.*" But to these the rejected, He says, "*Depart from Me.*"

Their plea is set aside ; because, though workers of miracles in Christ's name, they were not workers of righteousness : Psa. xv. 2. The will of God is far more truly done by holiness, than by miracle.

There is here a reference to the Psalms, which utter many a loud voice against "the workers of iniquity : " Psa. xxviii. ; xxxvi. 7—12 ; lxiv. ; xcii. In the 101st Psalm, Jesus, as Son of David, declares the sentence of admission or exclusion, and gives specimens of the works of iniquity or lawlessness, which will shut out.

"I will set no wicked thing before Mine eyes : I hate the work of them that turn aside ; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from

me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord:" ver. 3—8.

Confirmatory is the witness of the New Testament. "It is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, [Greek] we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself. . . . Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge Himself from these (things), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work:" 2 Tim. ii. 11—13, 19—21.

Here then is a case of exclusion; and not a singular one. "Many" will stand in this predicament. It is a very strong case, by which to exhibit the principles of admission and of shutting out. If those miraculously gifted, and employed in furthering by acts of power the interests of the kingdom, will yet be excluded; it, of course, settles the case of all nominal Christians, who

have no such power of miracle. These evil doers are held, *righteously* held, by our Lord to have worked *against* the kingdom far more than they wrought *for* it. For the millennial kingdom is not, primarily and characteristically, a kingdom of *power*. Its power is subordinate to its *holiness*. 'Tis the "kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of God," the kingdom of "*the saints*." Again and again therefore we are warned, that unrighteous persons shall not enter in: 1 Cor. vi.; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Eph. v. 5; Gal. v. 19, 21.

Workers of iniquity (or lawlessness) build up Satan's kingdom by their spirit and deeds of evil, far more than they pull it down by acts of power. They must therefore take Balaam's place.

"I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, *but not nigh*: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth:" Num. xxiv. 17.

They appeal to their public and supernatural confession of Christ's name, and to the will of the Father, done by miracles. Jesus refuses them as unacknowledged by Himself, and counteracting the main will of His Father, which is holiness. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." How is it done there? In holiness.

The case decided is like that of a sailor who, at the end of the voyage, should ask the captain for wages, because he had climbed the shrouds, handed the sails, and steered the ship. But what if, on the other hand, it should appear that he had wasted the provisions, purloined some of the cargo, and stirred up mutiny among the crew?

Believers! *profession is good: practice is better*. Profession is the copper sheathing that covers the ship's

sides. Practice is the stout timbers that underlie the copper outside. *Unite* these, and the ship will keep out the waters of destruction, and make her port. But profession without practice is the copper-plating spread over rotten wood. The searching sea will find out the imposture, and sink the vessel.

Profession is the shop-window : practice is the stores of goods which line and load the shelves all round, and pile the adjacent warehouses. With such a front, backed by such a rear, the merchant will win the day. But profession without practice is the shop-window of the bankrupt, all whose goods are ready to be seized, while he himself is due to the jail.

Profession is difficult : practice is far more difficult. But to what is reward given, save to difficulty overcome ? And here the prize is worthy to strain all our energies, and may claim our most patient efforts. Shall it not be joyful to see the Saviour take His place as king of earth ? Shall it not be gladness to behold earth, after the heavy pressure of the curse is removed, in peace and sunshine, in holiness and freedom, like the pale daughter of Jairus, awaking from her sleep ? Should we not desire to behold Israel restored to the land of promise ? the wastes of many generations blossoming into towns ? her hills smiling with the palm and olive ? her tribes going up to the solemn feasts ? Would we not behold Jerusalem the city of the Great King ? Did Queen Sheba, after beholding the glory and hearing the wisdom of Solomon, declare that the half was not told her ? How far more true shall that be of David's Son, and David's Lord ? The glory of Solomon was but a star to the sun who is yet to shine ; whose summer warmth is to breathe the new life on our half-frozen, decrepit world.

Unite then profession and practice, reader, as you

would enter the kingdom ! As you would tremble at being excluded, cease from iniquity !

Miracle is good : holiness is better. Miracle is good, though many in our day underrate and despise it. What a text for a sermon would a miracle afford ! How did such a text of old half-win the hearer, ere the sermon was preached. What was the bell that, with its solemn chime, led up three thousand to hear and be saved ? The tongues of fire, the sudden rushing wind of Pentecost ! What led five thousand to believe at one discourse ? The healed cripple of the Beautiful Gate ! What made all Lydda and Sharon blossom with faith as the rose ? The power that attended those words—to the eight years' palsied—"Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." What awoke faith in Joppa ? That word to the loved, beneficent Dorcas—"Tabitha, arise !"

But holiness is better. Satan has power : he can work wonders like God's. But O ! they are in his hands deceits to decoy and destroy. And how full is he of disquiet within ! How fearful his enmity to God, and God's to him ! But holiness is happiness. Holiness is conformity to God and His Son. 'Tis a proof of sonship. The Tempter in the wilderness called on Jesus to prove His Sonship by powers of miracle put forth. "If Thou be *the Son of God*, command this *stone* to become a *loaf*." No ! Jesus would prove His Sonship by a better title—His trust in His Father's love, despite the seemingly frowning circumstances which encompassed Him. God was there. His Father was careful of Him, though near were the stalking lion and the ranging bear : and around, far as eye could reach, the fevered desert stretched its sandy arms.

Namers of the name of Christ, depart from iniquity ! This is Christ's design in calling you, to deliver you from its every form : Tit. ii. 14. Presume not on your profession, your faith, your election of God, your name writ in golden letters in the Book of Life. If you work evil, though a son, the indignation of your Judge will find you out. Jesus is promoted to be king, because He loved and loves righteousness, and hates iniquity. He is no respecter of faces. If a worker of iniquity then, think not to escape His displeasure in that day ! For that day is the Day of Judgment, "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to each according to his deeds."

Have I then any reader who believes in Christ, but *does not profess Him* ? How should Christ own you in that day, friend ? It will be the day of the assembling of His host, the day on which to reward the red-cross warriors according to their obedience and bravery. But how should He reckon you one of His soldiers, who never put on His uniform ; never took a place in His ranks ? If those only who do the will of His Father enter the kingdom, I am sure *you cannot enter* ; for you do not obey the first of His open commands. Rise, brother, make profession, and begin obedience ! Put on the uniform, and take your place in the red-cross ranks !

In order to enter the kingdom, there must be (1) Belief, (2) Profession, (3) Obedience. What shall be said to those who neither obey, profess, or believe ? who manufacture a merit out of their very sin ? who seem to consider, that as they are no hypocrites, God cannot be severe with them ? who imagine, that as they will not give to Jesus even the semblance of a profession, they cannot well be found fault with ?

Strange delusion ! If the Sepoy in British pay be hung, because, though he has fought for the Queen, he is yet a spy sending intelligence to the rebels, how much more shall the open mutineer be shot ? Christ will punish treachery : but has He said that He will spare the open foe ? "Those mine *enemies*, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and *slay* them before me." If the plea of the professed servant of Christ be poor, such will have none at all.

Doer of iniquity, who disdainest to wear a mask, the angels will surely find thee out ! When they gather out of Christ's kingdom all stumbling-blocks and those who work iniquity, they cannot mistake thee as a tare destined for the furnace of fire. Are the cloaked and masked workers of evil to depart from Christ ? Assuredly condemned then are the pirates that openly hoist the black flag, and whose decks are red with gore.

Here is the great alternative spread before the world. *Come to Christ, now to be saved, or then depart to be damned ! Be blessed now*, as one whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Or be *cursed then*, as one whose sins are engraved in the rock for ever, and whose doom has been pronounced by the Great Judge !

THE TWO BUILDERS.

Matt. vii. 24—27.

24. "Every one, therefore, that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him* to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock.† 25. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and fell upon that house; and it fell not, for it had been founded‡ upon the rock.

26. "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. 27. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

In ancient days, navigation was quite in its infancy. The ship kept in sight of land. It durst not venture into the open sea, for fear of the loss of its reckoning. How should the sailor know where he was, if there were no headlands which he recognized? How could he discover his position at sea, if neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared?

But now suppose, that at Tarshish there appears a captain, who declares, that he has sailed all round the earth. His crew confirm his testimony. The story excites great interest. He calls an assembly of captains

* Tregelles reads, 'Shall be likened.' † The article.

‡ Pluperfect tense.

and sailors, in order to make known to them his secret. 'My success,' he says, 'is due to this little instrument, which I call a compass. Within this box a steel needle, which always points to the north, is freely suspended. It moves on gimbals, so that the rolling of the vessel does not affect it. Now this made me independent of sun, moon, or stars. Even when the sky has been overcast for weeks together, I have felt quite easy, certain of my place at sea, and have carried my ship all round the earth. By sailing constantly westward from this port I have returned to it again. Here is the chart of my voyage. In its course, I have discovered a vast continent, which lies thousands of miles away from this city. Here are some of the strange products of that land, never before visited by a European.'

They test his compasses. They handle the specimens. They pore over the chart. Astonishment and admiration are in every heart, and on every face. They rise to applaud. 'Sir, you are the greatest discoverer that has ever appeared: you are a benefactor of the human race: your name shall live with glory among all seamen to the end of time!' And they leave the meeting, to go and spread abroad the fame of this marvellous invention, this wondrous discoverer.

But two of those captains who said little or nothing amidst the applauses of their comrades, step up to this prince of seamen.—'Will you allow us, sir, to buy one of these valuable instruments? For we are going to put to sea in a week.' 'Buy! No! But you are welcome to have them as a gift. There is one for you! and there is another for you!'

Now, who honoured the discoverer most? Who were the wisest? Those who admired and praised? or those who *reduced the discovery to practice*?

Men must give but one answer. This parable then confirms the Saviour's sentiment in the verses just read. He does not depreciate admiration of the truth, and profession of it. But he requires practice to be added to it.

In the subject before us, Jesus wishes us to perceive, how *practice* secures both the *stability* of our *profession*, and our *entrance into the millennial kingdom*.

All believers then are closely interested in the words before us.

For all are builders : and our houses are of the one description, or of the other.

It is indeed commonly assumed, that the two builders describe persons as far apart, as are the hypocrite and the true believer. 'Jesus,' it is said, 'is the rock on which the one builds : his own works or professions are the sand on which the other rests his house. Death and judgment, or the trials of life, are the testing winds and waters of the parable.'

To this I cannot agree. It appears to me clear, that both the builders are believers.

1. Jesus makes but ONE POINT of difference between the two. *Both hear His words*. And, by "hearing," Jesus seems to mean believing. "But I say unto you *which hear*, Love your enemies : " Luke vi. 27. Here disciples are intended. Again, the contrast between believer and unbeliever is made to consist in hearing or not. "*He that is of God heareth God's words : ye therefore hear them not*, because ye are *not of God* : " John viii. 47. "My sheep *hear My voice* : " John x. 27. The difference consists in *doing* or in *not doing* them. Now is it not perfectly possible for a believer to admire, and not to perform, our Lord's precepts ?

It is necessary to the force of the lesson taught, that between the two parties there should be but one point of difference. For the Saviour would divert us from conduct prejudicial to our interests, by a perception of the sad consequence. Those consequences then should be due to the one error pointed out. It is evident, therefore, that the parable embodies the difference which Jesus proclaims at first. This difference of the foundation then is the difference between the doing, and not doing. The rock-built foundation, therefore, is that of the *doer* of the truth. The sandy foundation is that of *profession alone*.

2. Jesus distinguishes the two builders, not by making the one "good" and the other "evil," but solely, by calling the one "prudent" or "wise," the other "foolish." Now believers may be "foolish." All believers are foolish in comparison with the children of this world : Luke xvi. 8. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is an instance corroborative of this to all who are satisfied by the arguments adduced, in a tract entitled,—"*All believers interested in the Parable of the Ten Virgins*,"—that the Ten Virgins are all converted.

3. If the question indeed were one between believer and unbeliever, then Christ were the Rock, and the sand some false ground of confidence rested on for salvation. But, as before observed, Jesus is not treating of justification to unbelievers, but of the kingdom to believers. And moreover, the special point on which He is now insisting, is, the necessity of adding *practice* to *profession*, if we would obtain a place in the glory of His reign.

The present text is bound up with the previous paragraph, by the word "therefore." It is a further

deduction from the general principle laid down in Matt. vii. 21, that the owning of Jesus' Lordship is not enough to secure an entrance into the millennial reign.

He had given a striking instance of profession attended by miraculous power, but had declared His rejection of such confessors of His name, because of evil works.

He now sets before us two cases as well worthy of our notice; one, where rejection will arise from deficiency in the practice of the Saviour's commandments; while, in the other, there will be reception, because both profession of Christ's name and the practice He requires, are united.

In each case there are three points observable.

I. THE BUILDING. II. ITS TRIAL.

III. THE RESULT.

I. We consider then the case of the wise builder. The building is his profession of faith in Christ. This answers to the calling Christ Lord: Matt. vii. 21. His *practice* is his laying the foundation on the rock. He not only hears the sayings, but **DOES** them. Now it is the carrying them out into practice which constitutes their difficulty. It is overcoming the struggles of the flesh which is so hard. It is the work with pickaxe and spade that is so laborious. It is far easier to lay mortar on bricks, and to add brick to brick, than to dig and delve: for the deeper we go, the harder is the resistance, till we come to the solid rock. The foundation is the least visible part of the house: but it is the most important. Practice of holiness is oft more of a private nature than profession of opinions. Of the difficulty of this part Jesus gives

us an idea, in those words in the parallel place in Luke. "He is like a man that built a house, and *digged deep*, and *laid the foundation on the rock*:" Luke vi. 48.

Practice is a wonderful solidifier of our knowledge and of our principles. Here are two persons of equal memory and musical ear. They both attend lectures on psalmody. Both are delighted at the effects, and admire the ease and simplicity with which it can be taught. But one of the two joins a psalmody-class, and practises twice a week. The other admires the lectures, and there his interest ceases. In the course of a year, which would remember most of the instructions of the lecture? Which would have the most firm grasp of the power of singing?

We proceed to the

II. TRIAL OF THE HOUSE.

It is God's design to test the religious professions of the earth. Jesus forewarns us of "the hour of the temptation which is about to come upon all the habitable earth, to try the dwellers upon the earth:" Rev. iii. 10.

In our Lord's life, Satan pleaded for permission to try the apostles' faith, and obtained it. 'Tis God's declared purpose to try faith again.

Three agents conspire to assault both houses.

1. Rain. This comes down from above, and answers, I suppose, to the temptations from evil spirits, which will be abroad in the latter day. At the close, Satan and his angels are cast out of the heaven into the earth, and a time of woe, arising out of the devil's anger, begins: Rev. xii.

2. Rivers arise out of the rain. This teaches us the results on earth of the temptations of evil spirits. The

stream and current of popular feeling will set in for evil, and against the truth of Christ. Persecution will arise, and the fears of loss of character, property, friends, country, and life, will be brought to bear against the truth : Rev. xiii.

3. There is yet another agent of trial. The "winds" answer to the many forms of false doctrine then flourishing : Eph. iv. 14. Jesus has hinted this in warning us, in the previous paragraph, against false prophets.

The scene predicted then is such as that of Matt. xxiv. 9—12. These three powers assail the profession of the practical Christian. The three united fell upon the house, to test its powers of resistance.

Outward strength of the elements conspire to try the *inward* strength of the edifice. Would the man's confidence in Jesus as the Great Teacher and Lord of all, hold out against the many inducements to give Him up, and to sail with the stream? Persecution tries how much a man is willing to surrender for Christ. False doctrine tries whether his belief hangs together on firm principles. Both test how far his heart is engaged in his religion.

III. In RESULT, we find, that,

"It fell not."

The three forces expended their strength in vain. There was a passive power of rest within, which broke their powers of producing motion : a greater power of solidity, than their power to scatter and rend.

The wise builder stands out against reproaches and ridicule, evil surmises, slanders, imprisonments, death itself.

The reason of this stability is given. "For it *had been* founded on the rock." The tense is important.

The storm burst not till the foundation had been dug, the stones well laid, and the cement was quite set. Rock will not give with the violence of wind; it stands out against the force of water. The Atlantic ocean, hurled by storms, beats in massive fury against England's southern and western coasts. But the rocks break its heaviest charges. Thus the house partook of the solidity of that on which it was built.

The builder had counted the cost of profession, and was willing to pay the last sixpence for his tower. His previous obedience in smaller difficulties had educated him to bear far heavier. He had grown robust in faith, and came off conqueror. It was a settled thing with him, that it was right, and safe, and wise, and holy, to dare all events in Christ's service. And, therefore, when the trial came, it found him prepared. If we practise now in this time of comparative peace the Master's precepts, we shall stand, if even persecution unto death should arise.

This is very comforting. Have we not, when reading of martyrs and their endurance, shrunk at the thought—'How could I bear *this*? Should not I prove a coward, if assailed thus?' We can tell then hereby, whether we should stand or not. If we make now such sacrifices, and carry out now such acts of self-denial as our Lord's precepts require, we should stand firm, even if martyrdom threatened us, and all our present privileges were swept away.

This we see in Job. He was practically holy. He not only feared God, but eschewed evil. He offered sacrifice for his sons day by day, lest they should have sinned, and have been unforgiven by God. This was acting out whatever of God's will was then known.

Then came Satan's petition that he might tempt Job,

and God's permission. How heavily did the waters then descend, and smite upon Job's faith! A messenger runs to tell him of his 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 asses taken by the Sabæans, and the servants slain. Ere he has ceased, comes the news of his 7000 sheep burnt up by lightning, and the servants slain. Before the messenger has finished, comes the sad intelligence, that the 3000 camels have been carried off by the Chaldeans, and the servants in charge slain. And last, and saddest of all, fall the tidings, that, in the midst of festivity, a wind from the desert had smitten the house of his eldest son, and had buried his family at one fell blow.

Beneath this succession of trials, Job's faith still stood. "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Sore and sickening disease afflicts him next, and visions and dreams of trouble assail him. The weaker faith of his wife gives way. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die!" How beautiful his reply! "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall not we receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips:" Job ii. 10.

We come then to the case of

THE FOOLISH BUILDER.

He is not, like the rejected prophets and miracle-workers of the previous paragraph, a worker of iniquity. He professes the name of Christ as his Lord. He is moral, upright, just. But he does not obey the peculiar precepts of Jesus, specially those set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. He admires them, but does them not, considering them too high for practice. His

sentiments, however, are all in favour of Christ, yea, he loves Him.

There are plenty of such characters around. These are they who build their profession on the sand. A house so built may last for years. There is ordinarily no severe pressure tending to overthrow our dwellings. The force of gravity ordinarily keeps them in their place, if they be but built perpendicularly. And even thus, for generations there has been no severe force exerted against the profession of Christ's name, at least in England and America.

But a testing time is coming. 'Tis a part of God's plan, foretold, prepared. The Scriptures must be fulfilled, that thus it must be.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of:" 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

"For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn

from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that had bathed, to her wallowing in the mire" (Greek): 2 Pet. ii. 18—22.

Unbelief of the Saviour's return is to be widely spread and confidently held, so that believers in that doctrine will be objects of scorn: 2 Pet. iii.

The trial of the house receives plenteous illustration from the climate of Palestine, India, and tropical countries. The lands there are not, in general, lands possessed of abundant ever-flowing rivers, or receiving frequent rains. But beneath the fierce heat of the daily sun, during three parts of the year, vegetation withers, and all but a few rivers and perennial springs dry up. The channels of the winter-torrents, where heady rivers tumbled their swift waves, are now dusty. But a storm is collecting. The clouds gather to fearful blackness. Lightnings suddenly clothe the landscape in robes of fire. The thunder rolls in long, deafening, scarcely-broken peals. Down pours the rain in sheets. The dry plain is now flooded. Torrents leap from the hills, and whirl along with foaming speed. The wind rises, and its hurricane gusts are added to the confusion. Then, then is the trial of the house!

These things are not fancies. Take an occurrence from the notes of a traveller.

"The Monk Joachim candidly confessed to me, that he did not read his Bible at all, and therefore could not converse upon the subject. While we were vainly striving to overrule his objections to hear some verses read, a sudden but violent storm arose, and loud thunder echoed through the mountains. The brow of their hill whereon their city (the city of the Nazarenes) was

built was every moment gleaming as the lightning flashed. The rain fell in torrents, and in the course of an hour, a river flowed past the convent door, along what lately was a dry and quiet street. In the darkness of the night we heard loud shrieks for help. The flood carried away baskets, logs of wood, tables, and fruit-stands. At length a general alarm was given. Two houses built on the sand were undermined by the water, and both fell together, while the people in them escaped with difficulty. It was impossible not to pity these poor homeless creatures, and at the same time, to thank God, that we were in a secure building. The power and meaning was thus made plain of these words spoken by our Lord. 'Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.'—"Biblical Illustrations, No. II.," *Christian Treasury*, 1855, p. 369.

Rain assails the *roof*, the winds assail the *walls*, the torrents the *foundations*. Now the latter is the chief point. Sand is movable, both by wind and by water. And here the waters are sweeping past the house, bearing away the loose particles as they run. Each moment is stealing something from the foundations. The weight of the whole presses unequally on the soil: the house cannot stand erect. It leans forward, totters, rends asunder, and with a hoarse crash, and amidst a cloud of dust, the house is a heap of ruins.

I suppose then that our Saviour is here foretelling that loss of faith in His Lordship, which will take place in the latter days.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the

latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of the faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained:” 1 Tim. iv. 1—6.

Satan will aim in the latter day to overturn belief in Jesus as the Son of God. He will do so, by means of a lie sustained with dreadful energy of miracles, so as to hurry away all the non-elect to perdition. And even others will reel beneath the temptation, and fall.

“And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed:” Dan. xi. 35.

The triumph of the wicked, the prosperity of the enemies of Christ, lead many to think, that Jesus is not Lord of all.

The fall is “great.” (1) Present profession is given up: for faith has been shaken to its foundations. ’Tis not merely a great crack, or some of the tiles blown off, or some windows blown in, or an angle of the house fallen. The whole house lies low. (2) The fall is great in its effects on *others*. Far and wide travels the news, that a once zealous servant of Christ, has been

compelled to give up the faith. Enemies rejoice, the few faithful are shaken, and saddened, and perhaps bewildered, and ready themselves to fall. (3) ’Tis a great fall, in relation also to the destiny of the believer.*

For this, though not formally drawn out, as in the previous case, is manifestly to be supplied. Jesus shows us, that *that* profession of His name which is not sustained by answerable practice, is not to be trusted. It will give way, sometimes even now, when strong difficulties press it. It is certain that it will in *every* case, beneath the great final temptation yet to descend on the world.

But Jesus, in the previous paragraph, is speaking of entrance into the kingdom: and this is only another instance affected by the great principle there laid down. Not profession only, but practice also, are requisite to enter the millennial kingdom. But the *want of practice*, as Jesus here teaches us, will in some cases destroy even *profession*. What then? Can he, who, under force exerted by the enemy, has given up even profession, enter the kingdom? Clearly not! Deficiency of *practice* alone would exclude; but *deficiency of practice*, combined with the *loss of profession*, will most evidently shut out. “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven:” Matt. x. 32. That word most clearly settles the question. “Now the just shall live by faith, but if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Greek): Heb. x. 38.

This then is the folly of the builder. He is blind

* Have we not here another proof that ’tis a believer who is in question? Can there be a great fall in his case, who never has had faith?

to his own interests. All the trials of his previous profession have been endured without reward. "If any man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss:" 1 Cor. iii. So will it be, too, if any one's house be levelled with the dust, ere the judgment in Christ's presence. For this reason the other builder is wise. He not only retains his profession before men, but he attains the glory promised to the overcomer.

How unlike is this scene, to what Christians in general are expecting, and proclaiming! They are looking for Christianity to be triumphant over all foes, its subjects aggressive, united, growing in zeal and success. The Saviour sees at the close a testing of the religion called by His name, and a loud crash of professions laid dishonoured in the dust. Most are expecting, that the shipwrecked shall be drawn to shore, and safely housed by the gallant sailors, who, with ropes and rockets, with signals and mortars, line the beach. Jesus sees a giant wave overleaping the unwatchful, and in its overwhelming grasp carrying them out into the deep!

Lest we should imagine the thing impossible, the Lord has given us a type of that day. On his last ascent to Jerusalem, He warns His disciples thrice of the great trial that was coming on Himself. He gives Peter notice of the hour of temptation, when the Shepherd should be smitten, and the sheep scattered. He bids them watch and pray, lest they should be caught in the squall and the whirlpool. But they sleep instead of praying. Peter and the rest are confident. So deep is his love, that 'he is ready to go to prison and to death.' No outward force can make him give way. Then comes the shaking blast. Before it the apostles turn, and flee. Peter is caught in the whirlwind.

Surrounded by the enemies of his Master, his life, as he supposed, in imminent danger, his faith fails. He denies the Lord. He adds one denial to another. With oaths and curses he disowns Jesus. Was not Peter a believer? Were not the rest of the apostles converted? *

To Peter and the other apostles a respite was given, an opportunity offered to recover themselves, ere persecution anew invaded them. But it will not be so in the dread time before us. There is no recovery before the appearing of the Lord.

The passage before us is in sad keeping with Jesus' words about the salt losing its taste, cast out, and trodden under foot. It is in spirit like that word of Jesus to every disciple,—'Count the cost, lest, having begun to build, you be not able to finish:' Luke xiv. 28.

The Epilogue, or closing portion of the Sermon, offers to our notice four dangers which must be weathered, ere we enter the kingdom. 1. There is danger, lest we suppose that the *lax Christianity of the many is enough*. We may try and combine the love of the world with the profession of Christ, and so miss the door of entrance into the kingdom. 2. We may be led away by *false doctrine*, destructive of the truth as it is in Jesus, being deceived by its shows of self-denial, holiness, and humility. 3. We may think, that true

* A difficulty may arise in the minds of some students of prophecy. The watchful disciple of the Church of Christ is to escape the tribulation: Rev. iii. 10; Luke xxi. 36. How then should he be caught in this severe trial of faith? The unwatchful disciple is left to the time of trouble. There are also Jewish disciples to rise up after the Christ is disowned.

doctrine is everything, and *practice* a very secondary affair, quite needless to those so enlightened as ourselves. 4. Or we may *admire* the standard of *Christ*, and *live* by that of *Moses*. Against these rocks the Saviour warns us. He has erected a lighthouse on each of these four crags. Let us steer past them!

Jesus has taught us to pray that we may escape the awful events of the day of the Lord. He has given us, through mercy, peace in this realm. But we cannot tell how soon danger may arise. We are soldiers of Christ. And soldiers cannot tell how soon they may be called out of barracks into the tents, the field, and the battle. We do well then to be ready for trouble. We may be so living, we *ought* to be so living, as that, if persecution in its severest shape were to arise, we should stand firm to the last. He who embarks on a stormy sea, does well to carry with him a life-belt. If the storm arise, it will not suffice him, that there are plenty of *life-belts on shore*. He must drown, if it is not *on board*. What would a prudent captain do, whose weather-glass has fallen to 'stormy?' He would take down his top-gallant sails, and furl all the others but the one needed to keep the ship steady, and bid the sailors keep a bright look-out for squalls. When the gale comes ploughing the ocean into foam, it only whistles and howls through the naked masts, and spars, and rigging. He has made 'all snug.'

He, on the other hand, who is advancing with every sail set, disregarding the foretold gale, as soon as the squall reaches him, has his masts snapped off, his men killed by the fall, and is ready to sink with the tremendous surge.

He who trusts *Jesus'* word, and acts it out now, is

the prudent captain. He shall suffer no shipwreck. He shall outride the storm. Inspiration itself guarantees us. After describing the practical graces which are to be added to *faith*, Peter tells us, connecting together the two points of the text, "*If ye do these things, ye shall never fall*. For so *the entrance shall be richly ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:*" 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

On some disciples we can look with thankfulness and confidence. High though their branches rise above the earth, they will not be overturned by the gale, for so deep do their roots sink into the earth.

But there are others to whom this word solemnly applies. Reader, do you want roots? Does every wind shake you? You have knowledge. You make a right profession. Are you deficient in the practice of Christ's commands? If so you are ready to yield, and sometimes fall, before even the feeble temptations of our day. How would you stand, if persecution unto death should arise?

How many hold their profession only by the tips of their fingers? They are smooth-water, fair-weather sailors. An untrue report about them, a falling out with one of those in communion, the danger of the loss of a situation, the dread of a husband's or wife's displeasure, makes them draw back again to the world they had left. They resign fellowship and profession at once. They do not see, that by the same step they give up also the kingdom! If both *profession* and *practice* be required to enter that, they who surrender *both*, cannot be admitted. Be warned, believers! Be doers of the word, if you would taste its present and future joys!

The Saviour has spoken of the failure of profession, and of hope, in some of His own people, under the last storm of Satan's awful hour.

But cases too sadly like it are occurring frequently in every city in our land. A young man brought up by godly parents, diligently instructed in the Scripture, seeing its effects in his own home, satisfied of its general truth, though not savingly receiving it into his heart, is brought to a great city. He is thrown as apprentice into contact with many young men. But how unlike their conversation and conduct to the holy flow of the river of his own home! He finds swearing, cursing, smoking, despising of authority, lying, fornication, ridicule of religion. He is shocked at first. He feels like one who has ventured out to sea amidst waves of foam, as soon as he leaves the lofty shelter of the rocky land-locked port. He cannot join at first in these evil ways. The Sunday ungodliness and licentiousness especially grate upon his heart. But he has no root in himself, no hold on God. The foundation of his seeming piety is his education. No living faith upholds. The principles in which he was brought up are undermined day by day, till at length he is as bold and godless an infidel as any of the crew.

My address has been hitherto to the soldiers of Christ: enforcing on them the necessity of obedience to the orders of the commander-in-chief, and attending the muster of the troops each Lord's Day, as ever they would receive the smile of the Great Captain of salvation, or partake His victory and reward.

But *reader!* are you a *rebel!* What can I say to you? That it is *mercy*, which has spared you till to-day! Great is God's patience; or, for provocations so many as

yours, the clouds might have been bidden to spear you through with the lightning's point. Great His long-suffering, or the globe with earthquake-roar would have rent asunder, to swallow you up, as erst Dathan and Abiram. But that God is good, the waters might have been commissioned ere this to close over your head, and sink your soul beyond the reach of pardon or of hope. Your sin is greater than Sodom's. They despised the angels. You, the Lord of angels. You pass by contemptuously the pardon of the Father, the blood of the Son of God! You hold out in disobedience against the threatenings of endless fire and torment. You are unattracted by the visions of glory, and peace, and love, in the Paradise of God for evermore. What enchains and enchants you then? Beggarly trifles! which are passing away, and rending, as they rise. Bubbles, which are breaking into thin air even while they glow and glisten!

Are you a *rebel!* a rebel against the King of kings? a rebel, because you love sin, and hate holiness? Then God must destroy you, ere peace and happiness can visit earth. He must cut you off, on the same principle that the gardener crushes the snail on the garden walk, and poisons the thieving sparrows, and traps those nightly robbers, the mice and rats. If he would have his garden fair, his peaches, his grapes, his nuts, his lilies, his roses untouched, uninjured, he must destroy these nuisances.

And are you willing to stand in the way of the glory of God, and the happiness of His creation? Will you stand out against the holy laws, the just government of God? Would heaven lose its felicity, if you, and those like you could intrude upon its holy joys?

Ho, rebel! ground your arms! Your cause is *wicked*. You are resisting the *Holy One* and the *Just*. You are refusing the Son of God His due. For His holy obedience unto death, for His love of His Father and of man, God has given Him all authority in heaven and earth. He calls on you to pray for His coming, and to obey His commands! Be baptized in His name! Sit at the sacred Supper in remembrance of His death! As long as you refuse, you rebel.

Ho, rebel! ground your arms! Your cause is *desperate*. Almighty power compasses you in on every side. You cannot devise anything so secret, but He knows it long before. You cannot escape His eye, go where you will, to the ocean's depths, or to the snowy mountain's top. You walk amid a thousand deaths. He has but to withdraw His hand from your heart, which He now causes to beat, and your naked soul would fly from its fallen tent. He has but to cease making your lungs to play, and you would find how hard a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, the God you provoke, the God Who has all eternity to torment you in.

What would you think of one who hung over a fearful precipice by a rope dangling in air, and that rope held by one whom he had offended, on whose will it depended whether he should ever walk the firm earth again, while yet he not only refused to ask his pardon, but continued to insult him? That foolhardy, frantic man are *you!* And, if you fall, 'tis into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, for ever, for ever, for ever!

Cease, cease your folly! Give up your wickedness! The Saviour so justly offended stretches out to you the arms of His mercy!

POSTSCRIPT.

The opposition between Moses and Christ is drawn out strongly by Celsus the ancient infidel.

“But this again they will not consider. If the prophets of the God of the Jews foretold, that He [Jesus] would be Jehovah's servant, how Jehovah indeed by Moses legislates to grow rich and powerful, and to fill the earth, and to destroy enemies utterly, and to cut off whole nations, which also He did himself before the eyes of the Jews, as Moses says. And beside this He expressly threatens, if they obey not, that He would do to them just as He had done to their enemies. But this man who professes to be His Son—the Nazarite man—legislates on the contrary, that there is no approach to the Father for one who is rich, or ambitious, or making pretensions to wisdom or glory: and that we ought to care for provisions, or storehouse, as little as the ravens; and for dress as little as the lilies; that to him who strikes us once, we ought to give liberty to strike us again. Which then tells falsehoods? Moses or Christ? Or did the Father Who sent Christ forget what He told Moses? Or did He change His mind, and condemn His own laws? And does He send the messenger even for results opposite?”—*Origen against Celsus*, p. 343. To this, Origen replies very poorly, that ‘Things are not to be taken literally.’ ‘The letter kills.’ ‘The riches promised by Moses were spiritual! The blessing uttered on the destroyers of Babylon is to be taken spiritually:’ Psa. cxxxvii. 8, 9. ‘Jesus did not give any laws opposed to Moses. The resurrection is not to be received literally. Those who do so are poor ignorant Christians.’

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