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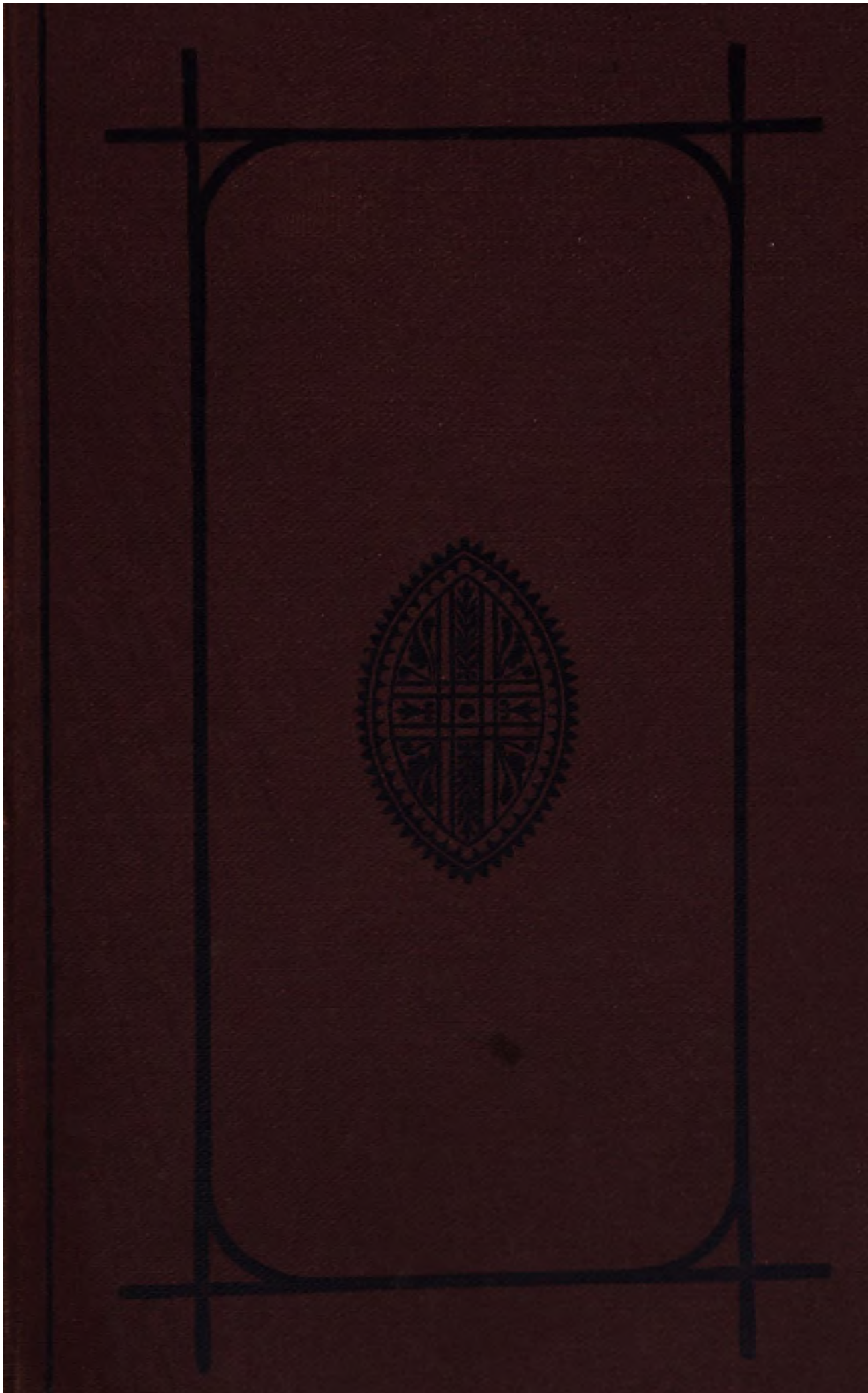
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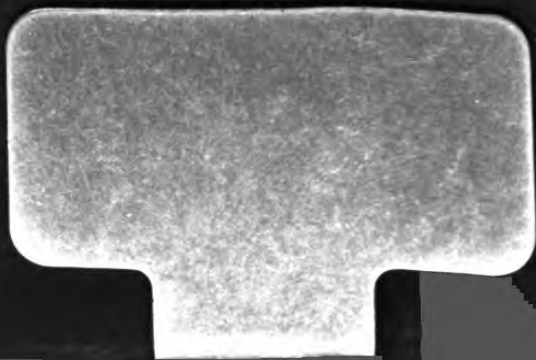


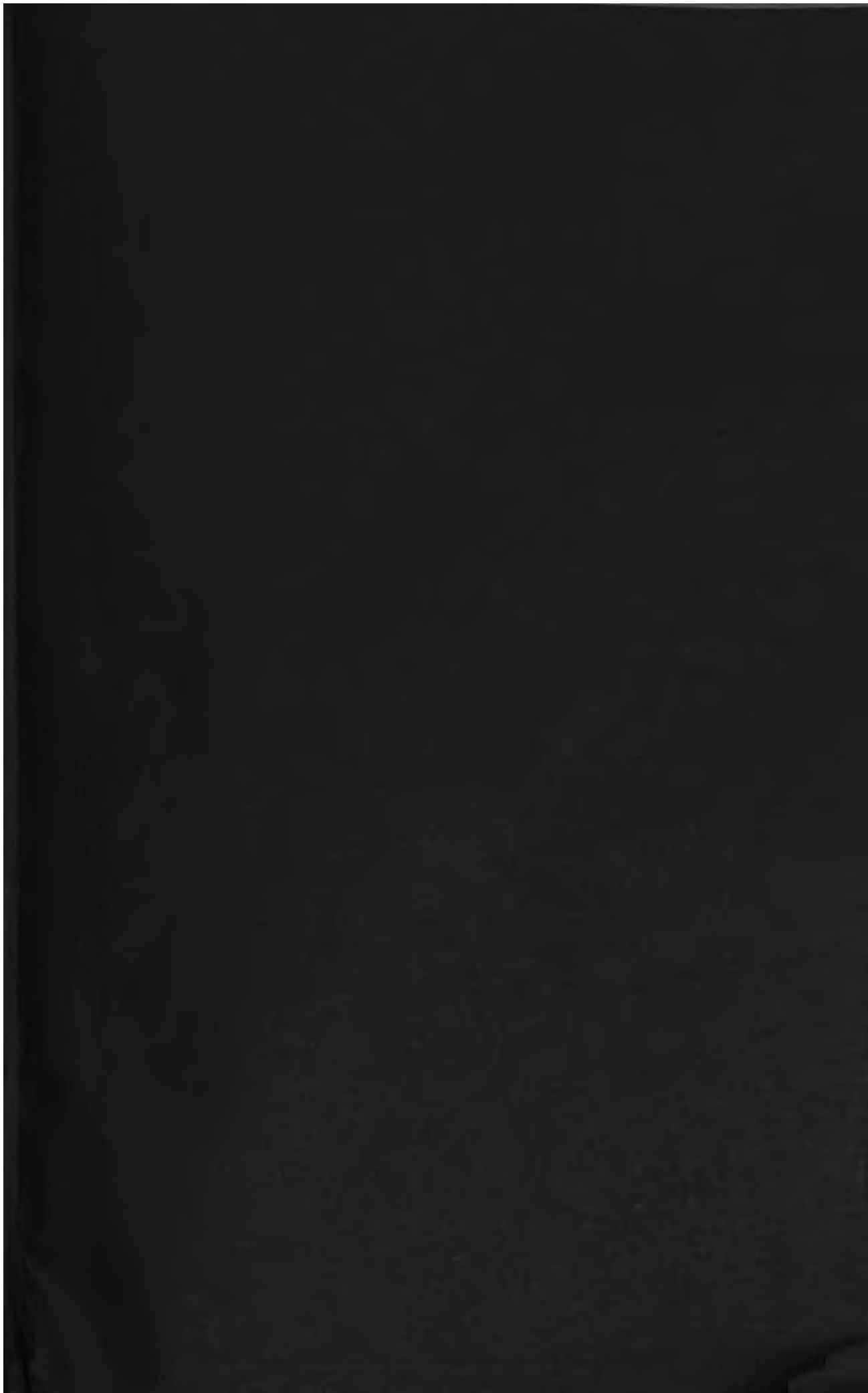
**Notes,
questions, and
answers on
our Lord's
parables**

Alexander Wilson



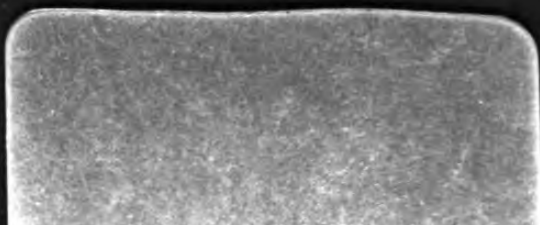
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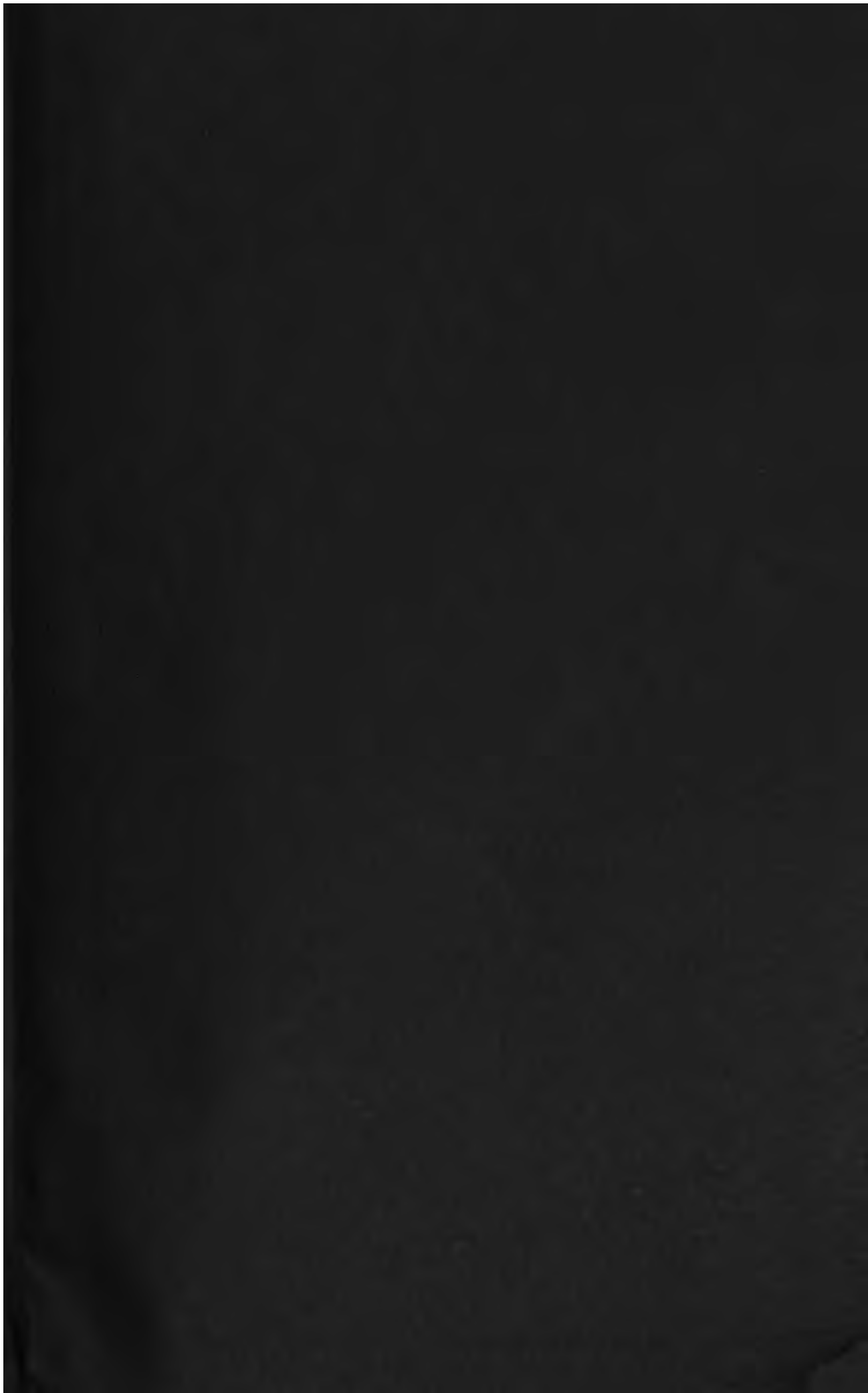


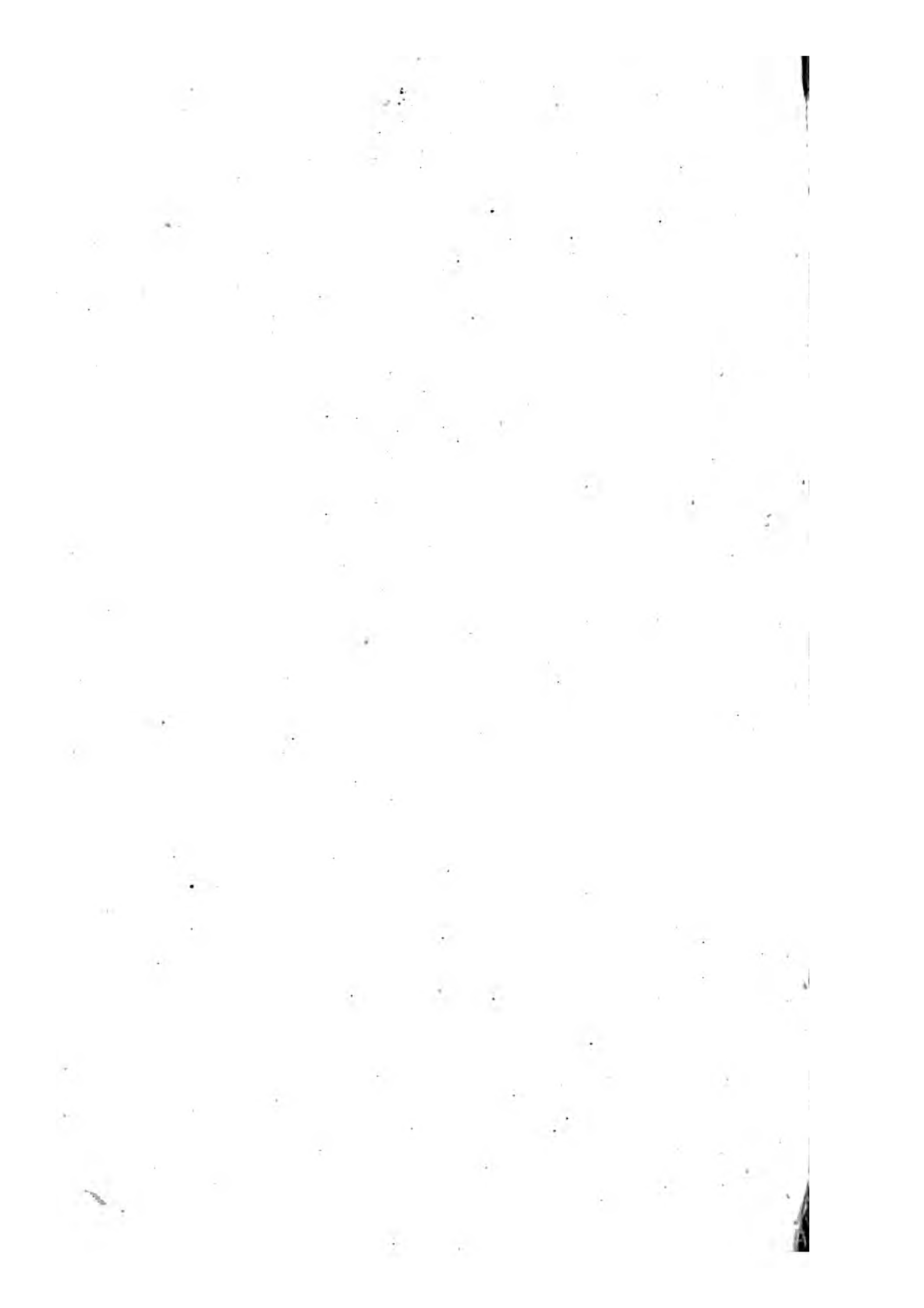




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NOTES, QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS
ON
OUR LORD'S PARABLES.

BY THE
REV. A. WILSON, M.A.



SEVENTH THOUSAND,

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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PREFACE.

THE works in this Series* are not intended to *supersede* careful preparation and study on the part of teachers; but only to furnish some materials from which instructed and earnest-minded persons may frame such catechetical teaching, convey such explanations, and draw such lessons, as are adapted to the varied capacities and ages of children.

It is suggested, as a matter of primary importance in the successful employment of the work, that when the *text* of any parable is fairly understood by the scholars, the Notes should then be carefully read to them, amplified, and explained; and that reference should always be made to those passages of Scripture which are specified in the context. If this plan be pursued, the strictly catechetical exercise will both be more easy and much more interesting.

Archbishop Trench's exhaustive volume on the Parables has furnished valuable materials to the compiler. It may be necessary to state that the Archbishop's consent for this purpose was previously asked, and was most kindly and promptly accorded.

* 'Notes, Questions, and Answers on the Gospels for the Christian Year.' 3s.

'Notes, Questions, and Answers on the Collects.' 1s. 8d.

'Gospel of St. Matthew,' with Notes. 3s.

'Text Book of Scripture Geography.' 2s.

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NOTES, QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS
ON
OUR LORD'S PARABLES.

—♦—
OF PARABLES.

A PARABLE is a comparison between earthly and heavenly things, by means of some familiar incidents; or by a story, the particulars of which are matters of daily experience: it is 'an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.'

In some of the parables in the New Testament a simple lesson is taught, which is not difficult of comprehension, and which has no historical meaning: such, for example, as that of 'The Sower.' Some again have a *twofold* meaning: the *first*, historical, local, temporary; the *second*, more general, as bearing upon the condition of the Christian Church to the end of the world; while others, especially those which begin with the words 'The Kingdom of Heaven, &c.,' sketch the prominent features of the Christian dispensation.*

It should be borne in mind that a parable, properly speaking, represents in its natural sense *that which is possible*, and in this respect differs from an apologue or fable such as Jotham told to the men of Shechem (Judges ix. 27), or that which Joash told about the cedar and thistle (2 Chron. xxv. 18). The rebuke of David by Nathan (2 Sam. xii.) is not a parable, but an allegory; for a parable must be the means of teaching some great moral truth or principle, and is not merely a figurative mode of expression,

* Except 'The Sower,' every one of the parables, as recorded by St. Matthew, begins with the words, 'The kingdom of heaven is like,' &c. This Evangelist, writing for Jews, dwells most carefully on the Kingship of the Messiah.

or an exalted strain of prophetic language, as in Num. xxiv. 15-20, or a sublime mystery symbolised in a vision and delivered enigmatically, as in Ezek. xvii. 2.

Though it may be difficult to give an exact definition of a parable, most people are agreed that it is not solely a narrative, but that it has a deeper hidden meaning and a more important bearing than those which appear on the surface. In teaching, the first endeavour, therefore, should be to ascertain what these are. Sometimes the preface shows them; as, for example, 'He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.' At other times we can only gather the scope and design from a careful attention to the circumstances under which the parable was spoken and the persons to whom it was addressed.

Each of our Lord's parables seems intended to teach *one* distinctive lesson, and to have *one* leading feature. Thus, the parable of 'The Leaven' describes the silent and unseen manner in which the faith of Christ spread from man to man, till it had evangelised the whole heathen world; that of 'The Growing Crop' shows the gradual increase which it attains in the believer's heart; that of 'The Sower' exhibits its origin in God's word; while 'The Mustard Seed' is emblematic of the rapidity of its growth.

It may be that our Blessed Lord adopted the method of instruction by parables because He dwelt among a people who were fond of figurative language, and who were accustomed to this style of teaching. Narrative and parable interest all classes of persons; and, with old and young, fable and allegory find general favour and ready acceptance.

THE SOWER.

St. Matt. xiii. 3-8 and 18-23.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow ;

4 And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up :

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth : and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth :

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them :

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth

it not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ;


21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while : for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it* ; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

St. Mark iv. 4-8 and 14-21. St. Luke viii. 5-8 and 11-15.

NOTES.

UR LORD having left 'the house,' probably at Capernaum, where He commonly dwelt during His ministry, and finding the multitude pressing upon Him, withdrew with His disciples into a ship on the Sea of Galilee, from which He could continue His instructions without obstruction or inconvenience.

He now delivers Divine instruction under the form of comparisons drawn from *natural* objects ; and His teaching on this day is more fully recorded than on any other occasion, except when He spake the 'Sermon on the Mount.'

This parable most probably originated in our Saviour having seen a person engaged in sowing seed near the borders of the lake. It may, however, be observed that the analogy between the *sower* and *seed* on the one hand, and a *teacher* and *doctrine* on the other, is both natural and

beautiful, and is, therefore, frequently met with in Holy Scripture (1 Pet. i. 23-25; Eph. v. 9).

Our Lord treats this parable as one which it was necessary for the hearers to understand in order to their comprehension of those which were to follow (St. Mark iv. 13).

Mankind is the field to be improved for the production of the fruits of wisdom and holiness. In order to see the condition of this field before Christianity had exercised an influence upon it, compare Rom. i. and 1 Cor. vi.

Christ Himself, His apostles, and disciples, are the *sowers* (Heb. ii. 3; 1 Cor. iii. 6; Acts xix. 20). The seed sown is the Word of the Kingdom, *i. e.* the truths and doctrines of God's revelation.

The efficacy of instruction will always be in proportion to the degree of attention, application, and candour with which it is received; just as the same seed and the same amount of labour will have different results, according to the nature of the soil, and the way in which it has been prepared.

The first kind of soil was the 'wayside,' or footpath across the field; which, though it might be good in itself, was rendered unfruitful by two causes: viz. (1), by its hardness, which was daily increased by every traveller who walked upon it, and (2), by the large flocks of birds, which usually follow the husbandman to pick up the seed which he has just scattered.

By not 'understanding it' * we are not to conclude that God's word is ever unprofitable to men from the natural weakness of their understandings, or from any obscurity in the Word itself. If so, then the author and not the *hearer* would be to blame.

When inattention and listlessness to instruction are persisted in, they at length end in aversion to it, and an incapability of receiving it; when, as in the case of the trodden pathway, the best seed can produce no fruit. In addition to this, Satan labours with unwearied zeal to harden the heart still more by evil thoughts, by worldly desires, and carnal lusts, and to eradicate any good impressions that may have been made (Eph. ii. 2).

* The Greek word translated 'to understand,' means 'to consider,' 'to lay to heart.'

The second kind of soil was 'stony ground,' that is, a thin coating of mould barely sufficient to cover the surface. The seed here 'sprung up,' putting forth its energy in the *stalk*, but the rock prevented the root from being nourished and strengthened.

The second class of hearers understand the doctrines and seek to appropriate the privileges of the Gospel; but they overlook the cost and the sacrifices which they are called to endure in their warfare with the devil, the world, and the flesh. See St. Paul's caution to such (1 Cor. x. 12), and contrast the finding of the 'Hid Treasure' (St. Matt. xiii. 44) and the conduct of our Lord Himself (Heb. xii. 2).

Against this class Satan brings hostile influences from *without*, here represented by the heat of the sun. These are persecutions and tribulations,* which strengthen a *true* faith (1 Pet. i. 7), but which cause a temporary or superficial faith to fail.

The root, which was wanting, is strength to bear up under these trials. We are elsewhere exhorted to add to our faith 'virtue,' *i. e.* courage. This grace was exemplified in St. Peter standing firm when so many others fell away (St. John vi. 68); and also in the Hebrew Christians (Heb. x. 34). We have a noted example of the absence of this 'root' in Demas, who forsook St. Paul when he was in circumstances of trial and danger (2 Tim. iv. 10).

The third soil was overrun with thorns, not full grown, but whose roots had not been properly eradicated. There was no lack of soil, perhaps good soil, to nourish the seed, nor were the elements at all unfavourable. The process accordingly went further than in the two former cases. But the soil being foul, careful husbandry wanting, and many noxious weeds springing up with the seed and depriving it of its share of light, moisture, and air, it never came to maturity.

This represents the most numerous class of hearers: *viz.*, those who retain their profession to the end, but who, being distracted by worldly cares, or drawn aside by the deceitfulness of riches, are Christians in *name* only, and not in *reality*. 'Having a name to live,' &c.

* The word 'tribulation' comes from *tribulum*, a threshing-instrument, and is used to signify the troubles by which God separates the good from the evil in His people.

Cares* and pleasures, although apparently opposed to each other, proceed from the same cause: viz., *an inordinate love of the world*. We speak here of *lawful* pursuits and amusements, which become sinful when they engross the heart and so obstruct all religious improvement (1 Tim. vi. 10; St. Matt. xix. 22). Of unlawful pursuits we have no need to speak; nothing can justify them at any time.

To prevent or overcome this evil, we should accustom ourselves to voluntary acts of self-denial; keeping in due subjection the body, its appetites and passions. In such a case, we may hope that the Christian graces of faith, hope, charity, &c., will take deep root, flourish, and bear fruit (Prov. xxx. 7-9).

'An honest and good heart' (St. Luke) is one of an earnest and truthful nature, not unwilling to come to the light, even though its actions may be condemned; desirous to be entirely renewed and to prove this renewal by amendment of life. For examples, consider St. Matthew, Zaccheus, and Nathanael.

'Good ground'—ground which had been properly prepared, and from which the stones and thorns had been removed. This is distinguished from the *wayside*, in *keeping* the seed. The proper covering of the seed, so necessary to its growth, represents serious attention to the message of the Gospel, as containing the words of eternal life. For an example of this, see St. Luke ii. 19, 51. Many promises are held out to those who are sincerely disposed to follow out in their lives and conduct the truths contained in God's most Holy Word (St. John vii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 5; Ps. xxv. 9).

Again, the 'good ground' is distinguished from the '*stony ground*,' in that fruit is brought forth with 'patience.' Patience and perseverance in well-doing are true tests of unfeigned faith. 'Add to your faith *virtue*' (2 Pet. i. 5). If we really have this grace, the scorching heat of persecutions or afflictions which burnt up the productions of the *stony* ground will bring to perfection those of the good soil. The graces of God's people are like stars, shining most brightly in the dark night of affliction (Dan. xii. 3), or like gold, when set free from its alloy by fire (Mal. iii. 3).

But again, the 'good ground' is distinguished from the

* The word 'care' in the original signifies that which 'divides the mind,' or 'draws the heart different ways.'

'*thorny ground,*' in that it retains the seed, and cherishes it until it *brings forth fruit.* The religious instruction, which in the one case is dissipated and lost through the distraction of worldly cares, is in the other nourished till it produces the fruits of wisdom and righteousness (St. John xv. 5-8 : compare also St. Matt. xvi. 26 with vi. 33).

The differences in the fruitfulness of the good ground represent the different degrees of personal holiness which exist among Christians : some being more free than others from the weaknesses and the failings of human nature. This difference will chiefly depend on the various degrees of attention which are given to the instruction and care of the soul. Hence the caution of our Lord (St. Luke viii. 18), and of St. James (i. 21). *All the fruit, however, was good ;* and, therefore, we have here another caution against rash judgment of others (St. Matt. vii. 1 ; 1 Cor. iv. 5).

In this parable of 'The Sower and the Seed,' our Blessed Lord has taught us that the success of the seed was not secured by its own *intrinsic* goodness, but was entirely dependent upon the condition and quality of the soil which received it. If then the instruction which we receive prove fruitless, before we attribute any blame to the seed sown, it is our part to take care that the soil of our own hearts is not left uncultivated, nor covered with every chance rubbish that the world's cares and pleasures may cast upon it. We must drive the ploughshare of self-examination deeply and steadily through our lives and conduct, and we must daily draw water from the unfailling well of Divine grace, in order to mature the good seed sown, and bring it to perfection.

God's promises of assistance are intended to stir us up to a diligent and persistent use of our own natural powers of action (Phil. ii. 12), in the same way that the genial influence of the heavens should stimulate and encourage the husbandman to patient and unremitting labour.

QUESTIONS.

In which of the Gospels do we find the parable of 'The Sower' ? By whom was it spoken ? Where was He at the time ? [By the shore of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Caper-

naum.*] What may have suggested this Parable to our Lord? [He may have seen husbandmen engaged in sowing seed in the fields.†] Whom are we to understand by the Sower? What is meant by 'going forth' to sow? [Going into the fields, which might be at a considerable distance from the dwelling-place.] What are we to understand by the seed? Where did the *first* portion of seed fall? What is meant by the *wayside*? [The hard beaten pathway which went through the field.] Was this unfavourable, or otherwise, to the seed? What was the consequence? Who is always on the watch to destroy the good seed sown in our hearts? How does the devil seek to accomplish this? [By suggesting evil thoughts and trying to erase any good impressions that may have been made.] Show from Scripture that he is very active in this work. [Eph. ii. 2; 1 Pet. v. 8; St. Luke xxii. 31.] What is our duty with reference to this adversary? [St. Matt. vi. 13; 1 Pet. v. 9.] When were you solemnly pledged to this? [In baptism.] What encouragement have we to do this? [1 John iv. 4.] Upon what kind of ground did the next portion of seed fall? What is meant by 'stony places'? What is said regarding its growth? [Although it sprang up in the stalk, it had not sufficient strength at the root.] What was the result of this? What class of hearers is here represented? [Those who claim the *privileges*, but neglect the duties of the Gospel.] How is Satan's activity displayed against this class? What is the root that is wanting in such persons? [Courage.] Why was this particularly necessary in the case of the first Christians? [They were everywhere persecuted and spoken against.] Quote an example of this grace. [St. Peter.] Upon what occasions? Give an example of the

* A recent American traveller says that, near a place believed to be Capernaum, he found small creeks or inlets where a ship could ride in safety, only a few feet from the shore, and where the multitude could listen without distraction or fatigue.

† Dean Stanley, in his work 'Sinai and Palestine,' gives the following account of a place near the Sea of Galilee which seems to meet all the circumstances of this parable:—'There was the undulating corn-field, descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway, running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to protect the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule, and human feet. There was the "good" rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hill side protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—the "Nabk," that kind of which tradition says that the Crown of Thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat.'

absence of this grace. [Demas.] Where did the next portion of seed fall? [Among 'thorns,' which were and are very abundant near the Lake of Gennesaret.] Was there any lack of soil here? Why, then, did the seed not answer the purpose for which it was sown? What kind of people are here represented? [Those who are Christians only in name or profession.] What prevents their bringing forth fruit? [The cares and pleasures of the world; or the deceitfulness of riches.] Why are two apparently opposite causes, viz. 'cares and pleasures,' said to produce the same effect? When the love of the world engrosses the heart, what is the result? [1 Tim. vi. 10; St. Matt. xix. 22.] Show the evil of this love, even in a less degree. [St. Luke x. 40-41.] How should we strive to overcome this evil? [By a strict fulfilment of our baptismal vows.] Where did the next portion of seed fall? Was the seed all equally fruitful? What amount of increase had it? What truth may we learn from this circumstance? [That there are different degrees of personal holiness among Christians.] In what manner should we not judge our neighbour? [Neither rashly nor uncharitably.] [St. Matt. vii. 11; Cor. iv. 5.] On what does the difference in Christians mainly depend? [On the degree of attention which is given to the instruction and care of the soul.] What cautions upon this point have we in Scripture? [St. Luke viii. 18; St. James i. 21.] What does the good ground represent? [An honest and good heart, *i. e.* one of an earnest and truthful nature.] Give examples of this. How does this soil differ from the 'wayside'? What is the covering of the seed in the earth intended to represent? [Serious attention to all God's revelation to man.] In whom do we find this exemplified? [St. Luke ii. 19-51.] Quote promises made to those who are disposed to do as God commands them. [St. John vii. 17; 1 Peter v. 5.] How was the 'good' distinguished from the 'stony' ground? What is meant by bringing forth 'fruit with *patience*'? [A continuance in well-doing.] What general lesson may we learn from this parable of 'The Sower'? [That our salvation will depend upon the way in which we make use of the good seed sown in our hearts, and upon the way in which we discharge our baptismal duties.] Repeat these duties from the Catechism.

THE TARES.

St. Matt. xiii. 24-30 and 36-43.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field :

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude

away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

NOTES.

THIS parable grows naturally out of the last. The Sower rests after his labours, and waits for the seed to spring up. When it does so, The Tares appear with it. The servants would destroy them; and out of this arises the foretelling of the final judgment.

A striking and instructive circumstance is apt to be lost sight of, in consequence of the idea usually associated in our minds with the word 'tares,' which has been employed here by the translators of the Bible.

Tares, in this country, are easily distinguishable from *wheat*; but, in Palestine, there is a plant which grows

abundantly among corn, so very like wheat in appearance that a careless or unpractised eye will fail to detect the difference. If closely examined, however, the plant is found to have *no corn in the ear*, being only a barren, bearded husk. How apt a type is thereby furnished of the wicked growing up among the righteous, and, outwardly at least, scarcely to be distinguished from them!

But the beauty of the divine image which is here employed is yet more striking. Wheat and tares are plants of a *different kind*; that which our Lord here speaks of, under the name of tares, is only a degenerate kind of wheat. It cannot be inferred, therefore, that some persons are *created* for burning, while others are predestined to the heavenly garner. The present parable offers no countenance to so monstrous an opinion; which is, in fact, at variance with every page of Holy Scripture.

The *Sower* of the good seed, as we are expressly told by Christ Himself in ver. 37, is 'the Son of Man.' This was a title which, more than any other, our Blessed Lord appropriated to Himself, intimating thereby His great love and condescension in assuming *human* nature, and as alone perfectly realising God's idea of man (Gen. i. 26: see Phil. ii. 6-8; also the Nicene Creed). The title was strange to the Jews (St. John xii. 34), the popular name for the Messiah being 'the Son of David.' This expression 'Son of Man' occurs eighty-eight times in the New Testament; and is always, except once, used by our Lord when speaking of Himself (St. Matt. ix. 27, xii. 23, xv. 22, &c.).

The 'good seed' is said by Christ to be the children of the kingdom, *i.e.* the righteous; those in whom the Holy Spirit of God being implanted, obey His motions, do God's will on earth, and so become children of His heavenly kingdom. (St. James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23).

The 'field' is the world, *i.e.*, since the parable treats of the kingdom of heaven, the Holy Catholic Church, which is ultimately to include all nations. Accordingly, the Messiah was sent to the whole world (St. John iii. 16, 17; 1 Tim. ii. 4-6; Titus ii. 11; Heb. ii. 9). The grand object of Christ's death was to give life and immortality *to all* (2 Tim. 1-10)—to fit and prepare all for future blessedness—to make all 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light' (Col. i. 12).

'His enemy sowed tares,' *i.e.* Christ's enemy, the devil. This was therefore no *chance* growth, the result of careless husbandry, but a work of *active* mischief on the part of the enemy. Christ's object in coming into the world was to overthrow the kingdom of darkness, of which Satan is the ruler (1 John iii. 8). He and his apostate band were once angels of light, but, by transgression, fell from their happy state (2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6). They are now busied in obstructing in every possible way the progress of the Gospel, which is designed by God as the means whereby man may be restored to that happiness and immortality which he has forfeited.

This 'wicked one' first tried to compass his designs, as in the parable of 'The Sower,' by *open violence*; and, accordingly, we know that persecution raged against the early Church for nearly 300 years without interruption: Christians through 'much tribulation' entering into the kingdom of heaven (Acts xiv. 22). Failing in this attempt, the devil began a new and more successful attack upon religion; and, during the *prosperity* of the Church, introduced into it men of corrupt minds, 'reprobate concerning the faith' (2 Tim. iii. 8). The evidence of his success was seen in the various schisms and heresies which afterwards sprang up and rent the Church.

The enemy sows the pernicious seed, not in his *own* field, but in another's; for the world, *i.e.* the Church, is God's property, both by right of creation and of redemption (St. John i. 11). Permission is given to the devil, for the present, to exercise a limited dominion in the world, in order to prove or try men's faith (St. Luke iv. 6).

Having sown the tares, the enemy 'went his way:' no after-care being needed. Error, hypocrisy, and sin of every kind, are *natural* to the human heart (Gen. viii. 21; Jer. xviii. 12): whereas the *good* seed not only requires a favourable soil at first, but afterwards much patient care and attention.

The character of the seed sown by the wicked one was only discovered by its after-growth: thus fulfilling our Lord's own words, 'By their fruits ye shall know them' (St. Matt. vii. 20).

We have here a clear intimation that the openly wicked and the hypocritical shall be seen standing side by side with

those who, having been made God's children, are striving to walk in the way of His commandments. And this mixed aspect—which the Church presented from the beginning, and will continue to present to the end of the world—is especially to be noted as one of the things which our Lord distinctly foretold, and of which He here forewarns us. This fact was set forth in *type* by Noah's Ark, which contained animals both clean and unclean—in *vision*, by the sheet which St. Peter saw let down from heaven—in *comparison*, by the threshing-floor, whereon is laid both wheat and chaff—in *parable*, by the net which contained fish of every kind; and, as here, by the tares growing among the wheat.

By the 'servants' we are to understand the *faithful* generally, who, at the sight of wickedness, or rather at the consideration of the origin of evil, are filled with perplexity; and who, with a zeal similar to that of St. James and St. John (St. Luke ix. 54), propose to 'gather up' the tares, *i. e.* to extirpate corrupt opinions and practices by the rough hand of violence and persecution.

Several reasons may be assigned why this request of the servants was not granted; some of which are contained in the parable itself:—

(1.) 'Lest ye root up the *wheat*.' It is not possible for any *earthly* tribunal to judge of men's characters in regard to their religious opinions. The rulers of the Church might confound with the tares some *real*, though *partially defective*, children of the kingdom. Those lesser spots and blemishes, which adhere to the best characters, are the first to strike the eye, and make an unfavourable impression; while their graces and virtues are either overlooked or but slightly noticed by those who assume the right of judging their neighbours. For cautions against *rash* judgment of others, see St. Matt. vii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 5; and even judgment with the *best* motives, Acts xxiv. 14, xxviii. 1-9; 1 Tim. i. 12, 13.

(2.) 'Lest ye *root up* the wheat' unintentionally. Good and bad men are so connected by various ties, and their interests are so closely blended, that no separation can take place without a certain amount of injury being done to the righteous.

(3.) The wicked tempt or try the righteous, and thus

afford opportunities for proving and showing forth their Christian graces (Rom. v. 3; 1 Cor. xi. 19).

(4.) In order that the wicked may themselves turn away from their wickedness and save their souls alive (2 Pet. iii. 9; Rom. ii. 4; St. Luke xiii. 9). Thus St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Matthew, Zaccheus, Mary Magdalene, and multitudes since, have been reclaimed and have served God lovingly and faithfully.

(5.) Judgment is God's prerogative, and therefore should be left entirely to His unerring wisdom and mercy. He has determined the time, viz. 'the harvest,' *i. e.* the end of the world.

This reply of the Householder, therefore, recommends the grace of *patience*; and also suggests that a great and admitted evil must sometimes be endured, rather than that the safety of what is unquestionably good should be endangered by rashness or intemperate zeal.

By both 'growing together' is meant the giving to both equal advantages (St. Matt. v. 45). The sight of the wicked thus prosperous in the world has often led good men to repine until God has explained the difficulty to them (see Ps. lxxiii. 2-17). All this, however, is but for a time (Acts xvii. 31). On this subject, refer to Abraham's confidence in the rectitude of God's judgment (Gen. xviii. 25; compare, also, Eccles. iii. 16, 17).

The fact of the *bad* being always mingled with the good in Christ's Church condemns the conduct of those who, like the Donatists in early times, separate from it on pretence of purity, because it may number among its members men of corrupt principles and vicious practices. This would have been as valid a reason for separating from Christ Himself and the apostles, because Judas was a 'son of perdition.'*

Christ does not, however, forbid a godly discipline; nor any necessary method of dealing with sinning members of His Church, even to excommunication for a time, if absolutely requisite (St. Matt. xviii. 18; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20). But He forbids all violent and forcible interference; such as *final* excommunication, which He has reserved to Himself. This was the error of the Novatians; a sect

* The difference between the Church *Militant* and the Church *Triumphant* should be clearly explained.

which was afterwards merged in the Donatists. (See Article xvi.)

By the 'harvest' is to be understood the 'end of the world,' the great Day of Judgment; up to which time both tares and wheat will ripen together, each according to its own nature. The tares will then be rooted up, and the holy and unholy finally, and for ever, separated (Eccles. viii. 11-13; Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Rom. ii. 5-9; St. Matt. xxv. 31-46).

'In bundles.' This expression seems to indicate that God will judge every man *according to his work*; that associates and companions in wickedness—those, as it were, of the *same rank and degree* in vice—shall be visited with an exactly similar punishment. See parable of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' (St. Luke xvi. 19-31); also Psalm xxvi. 9; 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

The end of the tares is to be '*burned*.' This punishment was not in ordinary use among the Jews, although it appears to have been known to them (1 Cor. xiii. 3). It was in use among the Chaldeans (Jer. xxix. 22; Dan. iii. 6). It is a common emblem of eternal misery (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7; Is. xxxiii. 14; St. Matt. xxv. 41-46).

The wheat shall be gathered into the 'barn,' *i. e.* into heaven—which is also said by our Lord to contain 'many mansions' (St. John xiv. 2); 'everlasting habitations' (St. Luke xvi. 9; 'a city which hath foundations' (Heb. xi. 10).

The righteous 'shall shine forth as the sun.' As the wretched and hopeless state of the *wicked* is often represented by *darkness*; so the happy state of the *righteous* is represented by *light*, the emblem of joy and gladness (Ps. xcvi. 11; Col. i. 12). The light shall appear *in* them, which was formerly obscured by their own infirmities and by objects from without (Col. iii. 3; Rom. viii. 18): it is not so much that they will be more righteous, but that they will be more *evidently* righteous. Their deeds, which have hitherto been darkened, their motives, which have hitherto been misrepresented or misunderstood, will then be as plain as the sun in the sky. They shall then appear to be, what in reality they are, children of 'the Father of Lights' (St. James i. 17).

After this final and everlasting separation, the following

and other glorious prophecies regarding Christ's Church will be fully accomplished :—Is. xxxv. 8, lii. 1, lx. 21 ; Joel iii. 17.

We shall do well to remember that the purity and perfection of Christ's Church will be attained by casting out as essentially alien to its constitution not only that which offends ; but also all those who work iniquity. Something must be rooted out ; something must be gathered into bundles for the burning. ' Heaven's gate is too narrow for us and our bundle of sins to enter. Let us, then, cast away our bundles if we would enter ourselves.'

QUESTIONS.

To what does the parable of ' The Sower ' refer ? [To the obstructions which the seed meets with in the nature of the ground.] To what does this of ' The Tares ' refer ? [To the disadvantages under which the best soil may labour from the malice of secret enemies.] What is meant by the kingdom of heaven ? Whom does the Sower represent ? Why does Christ call Himself so frequently by this title ? What was the popular name for the Messiah among the Jews ? What is meant by the ' good seed ' ? When was this first sown ? When afterwards ? What is represented by the field ? Why may the world be here taken for the Church ? To whom was the Messiah sent ? What was the first object of Christ's mission ? [2 Tim. i. 10.] What was the second ? [Col. i. 12.] Who are meant by the *Tares* ? Who sowed them ? [Christ's enemy, the devil.] When were the tares sown ? What is implied in this ? [That Satan's work is carried on quietly, and at a time when men cannot see either him or his deeds.] What, in regard to this enemy, was the object of Christ's coming into this world ? In what manner did Satan first try to obstruct the progress of the Church ? Was this successful ? What plan did he next adopt ? In which portion of the Church Service do we especially pray to be delivered from heresy and schism ? [In the Litany.] What is meant by saying the ' enemy went his way ' ? When did the tares appear ? What did the servants of the householder say ? Did he consent to this ? What was his reply ? In which of our Lord's disciples have we a similar example of intemperate zeal ? What is the first objection that may be urged against this proposal ? In attempting to judge others, what are we very apt to do ? What is the second reason that may be urged ? To whom would *immediate* separation often prove injurious, and why ? What is the

third reason? What benefits result to the righteous from mingling with the wicked? What is the fourth reason against this proposal? Quote from Scripture any passages that illustrate the design of God's long-suffering patience. What is the fifth reason? When will God authorise a full and final separation? What is meant by both 'growing together'? What has this sometimes given occasion to? How did Abraham express his confidence in God's judgment? What was Solomon's inference from the fact that God does not *immediately* punish the wicked or reward the righteous? What was a *type* of Christ's Church in the Old Testament? In what manner? How is it set forth in the New Testament? Who are the 'servants' of the Householder? [All members of Christ's Church.] What were the servants desirous of doing? Can you quote an example of this among the Apostles? [St. Luke ix. 54.] Who are the reapers? When will a final separation be made between the wheat and the tares? Under what other figure are we taught the same truth? [Sheep and goats. St. Matt. xxv. 43-46.] Into what shall the wheat then be gathered? What is meant by the barn? What shall be done with the tares? Why were the tares *burned*? [To hinder the seed from sowing itself again, and thus prevent the reproduction of evil.] What may we learn from the tares being bound in 'bundles'? What other parable teaches that associates in sin will be associates in punishment? [St. Luke xvi. 27, 28.] If, then, we wish to shine as the Sun in the kingdom of the Father, what must we now do? [Bring forth fruit to God's glory, and avoid as much as possible even the appearance of evil.] What lesson is principally taught in this parable? [That on earth and in the Church we must expect to find good and evil dwelling together.] What other great truth? [That a final and eternal separation between these will be effected at the great Day of Judgment.]

THE MUSTARD SEED.

St. Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field :

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds : but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

St. Mark iv. 30-32. St. Luke xiii. 18, 19.

NOTES.

WE have seen, in the parable of 'The Sower,' that a considerable portion of the seed is liable to be lost on account of the nature of the soil; in that of 'The Tares' we are further shown the dangers to which that portion is exposed which has fallen on 'good ground:' in order, therefore, to prevent despondency among the disciples, this parable of '*The Mustard Seed*' was spoken.

It sets forth the *outward* development of the Kingdom of God, and the continual increase of the Church, notwithstanding the apparent weakness and insignificance of its early condition.

The main point of the present parable is the smallness and obscurity of the Church at the beginning, and her vastness and grandeur in the end. This may suggest a reason why a 'grain of mustard seed' was chosen by our Lord in preference to that of any nobler plant.

The comparison of a kingdom to a tree was one which could not be altogether unknown to the disciples, as it is of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. Thus, with reference to *earthly* kingdoms, see Dan. iv. 10-12; Ezek. xxxi. 3-9. Also, with regard to God's *spiritual* kingdom, see Ps. lxxx. 8; Ezek. xvii. 22-24.

We are not to judge of the growth of the mustard-plant from what we know of it in our own country. The genial climate and fertile soil of Eastern regions cause an astonishing growth and increase in all kinds of plants.

The plant specified in the parable is not the one which is known by that name among us; but is supposed to be another species which yields a similar kind of fruit, and which is in Syria and Palestine called 'khardal.'

'In his field.' According to St. Luke 'which a man took and cast *into his garden*:' so called as having been *cultivated* by him.

'Least of all seeds.' Our Lord's words are not to be pressed beyond proper limits. 'Small as a grain of mustard seed' was a proverbial expression among the people whom our Lord was now addressing, and was used to denote anything exceedingly minute (St. Luke xvii. 6).

'The Kingdom of Heaven,' or the Holy Catholic Church, was originally enclosed in Christ Himself, just as a tree was originally enclosed in the seed out of which it grew. See a similar comparison, with regard to Christ Himself, in St. John xii. 24. His life and the small beginnings of the Gospel prove that this part of the comparison holds good.

'When it is grown,' &c. For the rapid increase of the Church, in defiance of all opposition and persecution, see Acts i. 15, ii. 41, and xxi. 20.*

'The birds of the air,' &c. This is said to be the case with the mustard-tree in the East. Its seed is much sought after by birds, so that the fowls of the air find within its shadow both food and protection. Compare the language of Revelation xxii. 2. Their thus finding shelter and food is prophetic of the refuge and defence provided for man within the Church of Christ, and its ability to supply all the wants of the believing soul (Ezek. xvii. 23, and also Dan. iv. 10-12). What can be more characteristic of the Church than that it proves a haven of rest, a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat, to all those restless, wearied spirits, who, like birds of the air, would else be without a home or shelter?

Good men are sometimes apt to be depressed by the apparent prevalence of evil, and to think that the Church is

* *Irenæus*, martyr, A.D. 202, makes mention of the churches in Germany, Gaul, Spain, the East, Egypt, Libya, and the South. *Tertullian*, who died about A.D. 220, says, that in his times the Gospel had spread to the Getuli, a people of Libya: to the Mauri, a people settled in Spain, and throughout Gaul and Britain in places inaccessible to the Roman arms.

still only as a grain of mustard seed in the world. Let them, however, rather take courage from a consideration of the efforts that are being made for the conversion of the heathen, for the reclamation of the ignorant and depraved among ourselves, from the success which has already attended these efforts, and from the great fact that Christ's Church will continue to go forth conquering and to conquer, till eventually, both Jews and Gentiles, heathen, barbarian, bond and free, shall be brought into the One fold, and follow the One Good Shepherd, Christ Himself. Then will be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah xi. 9.

If we would at last share in the triumphs connected with Christ's Kingdom we must now do what we can, as far as God gives us the means and the opportunity, to promote the accomplishment of this glorious state of things. We may hope and trust that the day will soon come when 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and when all flesh shall see it together;' but the knowledge of this the Lord has kept in His own hand, to be accomplished in His own good time.

QUESTIONS.

What is this parable called? How is it connected with those of the Sower and the Tares? What fact does it set forth? Does it relate to the outward or the inward development of Christ's kingdom? Was the present comparison one which a Jew could readily understand? Why? Give an example from Scripture of the comparison of a tree to an *earthly* kingdom. Do the same, with regard to God's *spiritual* kingdom. What is here meant by the phrase 'the kingdom of heaven'? In what respect does Christ say the Church is like a grain of mustard seed? * Why does

* Professor Royle says this plant grows in the neighbourhood of Damascus and Jerusalem, on the shores of the Dead Sea, in the Valley of the Jordan, and *on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret*. 'We have in it,' he says, 'a small seed, which, sown in cultivated ground, abounds in foliage. This being pungent may, like the seed, have been used as a condiment, as mustard and cress are with us. The nature of the plant, however, is to become arboreous; and thus it will form a large shrub, or a tree twenty-five feet high, under which a horseman may stand, where the soil and climate are favourable. It produces numerous branches and leaves, among which birds may and do take shelter as well as build their nests. Its seeds have the pungent taste, and are used for the same purposes, as mustard. And in a country where trees are not plentiful, viz. the shores of the lake of Tiberias, this tree is said to abound, i.e. in the very locality in which the parable was spoken.'

He select the mustard seed rather than the cedar or the vine? Who was the founder of our religion? How many apostles had He? How many disciples? What increase in this number is recorded on the day of Pentecost? What is supposed to be the name of the particular plant which is referred to in the parable? Who is meant by the man that sowed the seed? What is meant by his 'field' or garden? Why called 'his'? [St. John i. 11.] What proverbial expression was current among the people of the East with reference to this seed? Are our Lord's words then to be understood in their *literal* sense? [No; only as intimating something exceedingly small.] Is this expression used in Scripture? [St. Luke xvii. 6.] In whom was the kingdom of God, or the Church, originally enclosed? Illustrate this by comparison. Does Christ ever employ a similar comparison with reference to Himself? [St. John xii. 24.] Show from Christ's parentage, birth, companions, and treatment, that this part of the comparison holds good. Prove from the Acts of the Apostles the rapid increase of Christ's Church in defiance of opposition. What early writers testify to the same fact? Name some of the places in which they say the Gospel was preached. When did both these Fathers live? What does the mustard-tree afford to birds in Eastern countries? Where has God ordained that we may find proper food and nourishment for our souls? How does the Church furnish these? [By teaching us God's will, and offering to our use those means of grace which Christ has entrusted to her keeping.] How is Christ's victorious march represented in the book of Revelation? [Ch. vi. 2.] What is the result? [Rev. xi. 15.] What prophecy of Isaiah will then be fulfilled? [xi. 9: see also Hab. ii. 14.] How may we assist in extending the Church? [By our example, our prayers, our gifts, and labours.]

THE LEAVEN.

St. Matt. xiii. 33.

<p>33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman</p>	<p>took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.</p>
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St. Luke xiii. 20-21.

NOTES.

HIS parable seems at first sight to have exactly the same meaning as the preceding one. But, when it is studied carefully, an essential difference will be found in its object, and in the lesson which it was designed to teach.* As the previous parable sets forth the *fact* of the extension of Christ's Kingdom, so the present shows the *way* or *mode* in which this is to be accomplished, viz.: by its secretly, silently, steadily, pervading all nations of the world, and influencing society in a manner analogous to the effect of leaven on a mass of dough. It may be viewed as exhibiting the nature and power of Christ's doctrines upon the life and conduct of individuals (St. Luke xvii. 20).

The tendency of leaven to puff up, to make sour, and to corrupt, has caused it to be frequently employed in Scripture as a symbol of evil. It was, therefore, forbidden to be used in the offerings under the Law (Exod. xiii. 3; Lev. ii. 11), with the exception of some particular kinds of thank-offerings (Lev. xxiii. 17; Amos iv. 5). Under the similitude of leaven we are taught in 1 Cor. v. 6-8, that the companionship of the wicked tends to make others as bad as themselves; in St. Luke xii. 1, that hypocrisy will

* There can hardly be a more interesting employment for the student of Scripture than to examine those passages where our Lord seems merely to repeat His sayings. It will always be found that these instances are, in reality, not repetitions; but that each sentence has its own peculiar meaning. Examine the following passages:—St. Matt. ix. 16, 17, xiii. 44, 45; St. Luke xiv. 28-31.

vitiates all our actions; in Gal. v. 9, that the Judaizing teachers' doctrine of the necessity of the Jewish law to Christians corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel.*

Although frequently used in a *bad* sense, it does not follow that leaven may not be used in a *good* sense and have good qualities. Its effect upon bread, for example, is to make it lighter, more tasteful, and generally more nourishing. Hence its properties of warmth and penetration, and the power which a little of it has of lending its savour and virtue to much with which it comes in contact, will fitly represent the influence and power which the Gospel has of converting all nations of the earth, and of changing their character, even as leaven affects flour so that it becomes wholesome bread.

An example of the fact, that the same figure does not always represent the same thing, will be found on comparing 1 Pet. v. 8, Rev. v. 5, where, in the former passage, *subtily and fierceness*, in the latter *majesty and conquering strength*, form the points of comparison.

Leaven, being apparently of small account, but powerful in operation, may fitly represent Christ Himself, as in Is. liii. 2, compared with verses 11, 12; or the Apostles, as in 1 Cor. i. 18-31.

'Which a woman.' Our Lord here, as also in St. Luke xv. 8, speaks of the Holy Ghost under the image of a *woman*. And, as if to glorify all lowly occupations, it is on this as well as on that occasion a woman engaged in a humble domestic duty. There, she sweeps the house, here, she mixes leaven with meal.

'A woman took,' &c. The leaven, though mingled with the lump, did not originally belong to it, for the woman *took it* from somewhere else and added it to the lump. So also is it with Christ's Kingdom (St. John xviii. 36). Earthly kingdoms are of the earth, arising out of the earth (Dan. vii. 17).

'And hid,' &c. This intimates the *secret* nature of the operations of the *Holy Ghost*, which are from *inward* to *outward*; beginning in the heart and conscience, and not

* This parable has sometimes been interpreted as referring to the heresies and schisms which should arise in the Church from the influence of false and unauthorised teachers; but this theory has been considered inadmissible by a great majority of the ablest commentators.

failing, where properly used, to effect a mighty change upon the life and conduct.

'Three measures.' This was the usual quantity which was made into cakes at one time (Gen. xviii. 6; Judges vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24). In the last two passages, the Septuagint version has 'three measures.' A threefold division is frequently employed in Holy Scripture, containing, as it sometimes does, a reference to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

'Till the *whole* was leavened.' This is a prophecy of what will be hereafter, and is being even now daily fulfilled. It is here implied that, by virtue of its nature, the Church of Christ must spread until it has leavened and evangelised the world. It possesses a *transforming power*, and so acts upon the objects it meets that, ultimately, they become changed and partake of another nature (Is. xlix. 23, lx. 3).

The parable of 'The Leaven' should always remind us of our need of that 'daily renewal' by the Holy Ghost for which we pray in the Collect for Christmas-day. It is not sufficient for salvation to have been made in baptism 'a member of Christ, and the child of God.' The salutary and practical influence of the Spirit upon the heart and life must be continual, until the Christian has undergone that transformation into the likeness of his Lord of which St. Paul speaks (2 Cor. iii. 18; Col. iii. 10; Heb. v. 12-14).

QUESTIONS.

What is the difference between this parable and that of 'The Mustard Seed'? [That sets forth the *fact* of the extension of Christ's kingdom: this shows the *mode or way* in which this will be effected.] To what is the kingdom of heaven compared? What is leaven? [A fermenting substance which is usually mixed with flour to make bread light.] What effect is the kingdom of heaven intended to produce upon society? What upon the individual? Of what in Scripture is leaven usually the symbol? In this case, what properties in leaven form the points of comparison? What does our Lord Himself compare with leaven, and why? [St. Luke xii. 1.] Whom does St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, compare with leaven? In what was leaven forbidden to be used? Was it allowed to be used in

any cases? What good properties has leaven? What may these aptly represent? Give an example from Scripture to show that the same figure may be used to represent different things. In what respects may Christ Himself resemble the leaven? And in what may also His Apostles? Who may be here intended by the 'woman'? Show from Scripture that the Divine Wisdom is sometimes thus spoken of. With what is the Church frequently compared in Scripture? Is the same comparison used in any other parable? What is implied in the expression 'took and hid'? Compare Christ's kingdom in this respect with earthly kingdoms. What is here intimated by the word 'hid'? Why may the number 'three measures' have been here used? How much was three measures? [About four pecks and a half.] Of what are the words 'till the whole,' &c., a prophecy? Are there any predictions that kings should acknowledge the power of the Gospel? What will be its general effect on the condition of nations? As applied to individuals, what two great works of the Spirit are here set forth? Show how. Quote a passage from Scripture in which these works are conjoined. What Collect teaches the same doctrine? When were you made a member of the Church? What privileges were then conferred upon you? What duties did you promise to perform? What assistance is given to help you in the discharge of these duties? [The aid of the Holy Ghost, and generally all means of grace.] What is the general scope of this parable? [That as leaven spreads and renders more tasteful and lighter the mass with which it is mingled, so does the Christian religion spread from one heart to another and from one nation to another, till it changes the life of man, purifies, reforms, and saves the world.]

THE SEED SPRINGING UP IMPERCEPTIBLY.

St. Mark iv. 26-29.

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth

fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

NOTES.



THE EVANGELIST St. Mark alone records the parable of the 'Seed springing up imperceptibly,' which he subjoins to the parable of the 'Sower.' In that parable the Saviour had unfolded the several *hindrances* to the success of the word preached, as well as the *increase* which it will always find. But whereas in that we are only told in general terms that the seed in the good ground sprang up and increased ; in the present we are told that the seed passes through several stages, first the *blade*, next the *ear*, and last the *full ripe corn* in the ear.

By the 'man' is to be understood the preacher of the word, who is hereby encouraged to persevere in his labours ; and not to be dispirited if he fail to perceive that they are not visibly and immediately followed by success. See also Eccles. xi. 6 ; Isaiah lv. 10, 11 ; 1 Cor. xv. 58 ; St. John. iv. 37 ; James v. 7.

We also learn not to measure the character of any particular preacher, either from present visible results (consider the case of Judas, St. Luke, ix. 1, also our Lord's words, St. Matt. vii. 22, &c.) or from an apparent absence of these results. Christ Himself had little success in His personal ministry ; and Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets complain in many places that they were sent to a people that would neither hear nor understand.

'And should sleep,' &c. That is, should live in his usual way, being unable to exert any influence upon the growing corn. In like manner the preacher can do no more than

prepare and sow the seed in the hearts of his hearers by teaching, admonishing, persuading, rebuking, and exhorting them (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7), and meanwhile praying for God's blessing.

'And the seed should spring and grow up.' That the word of God *will* be successful, and that perhaps where least expected, we have already seen; and therefore the preacher should have faith and hope that in due season it will be abundantly blessed to those who hear.

'He knoweth not how.' The ultimate result of the word preached is as little dependent on the preacher, as is the growth of the seed on the toils of the husbandman. As God makes the seed to grow under His own secret operations, so also by means known to Himself He makes the word effectual to reclaim the erring and build up the weak and wavering (St. John iii. 8; Job xxxiii. 14-16).

The work of the ministry and the blessing of God although distinct are not separate agencies. The husbandman *must* prepare the soil and sow the seed, or God will not give the increase. The preacher *must* make known the word or it cannot be made effectual to the salvation of souls (2 Tim. iv. 2; Acts ix. 17, 18, xvi. 14; St. Luke xxiv. 32; 1 Cor. i. 17, &c.).

'Fruit of herself'—(*αυτοματή*, self-moving). It is not by this intended to say that the earth has productive power of *itself*: but only that the fruits of the earth are produced by a *divine* power and beyond *man's* agency.

'First the blade,' &c. Such are the ordinary operations of God's grace on the heart. First, like the *green blade*, delicate and tender, accompanied by weak graces, weak resolutions, and weak performances (St. John xvi. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2; Heb. v. 11-13; 1 Pet. ii. 2). To this succeed, like the *swelling ear of grain*, a more solid piety, a more confirmed knowledge, stronger graces, and more vigorous works (Prov. iv. 18; Eph. iv. 13-16). Then, 'patience having wrought experience, and experience hope' the Christian's faith is confirmed, is strong and triumphant—his holiness visible and enduring; having grown up 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' With these three stages compare 1 John ii. 12-14.

Although the *manner* of the growth in the heart is unknown, yet the growth itself should be a *real'ty* (St. Matt.

vii. 20 ; St. John iii. 8). Hence the necessity of the prayer, 'Lord, increase our faith' (St. Luke xxii. 5).

'But when the fruit is brought forth,' &c. When the work of God is brought to perfection, then the Divine Husbandman 'putteth in the sickle,' and takes away by death those who are ripe for His kingdom, because the time of *their* harvest has come, when they shall reap the fruits of their labours and rest in paradise until the judgment of the Great Day.

Since God in His ordinary operations works by means *insensible* to us, we must take special care not to mistake the workings of nature, or of the evil spirit, for grace. Many enthusiasts did this in former ages. Many heretics and schismatics, now, oblige those who wish to join their communion to recount minutely the circumstances attending their conversion. This is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture or the Church, and is no doubt highly dangerous. Many have made themselves unhappy and wretched without sufficient reason because they have not been able to point to some instantaneous, marked, and sudden change in their feelings and character. On the other hand many delay to make an attempt at personal holiness waiting for the arrival of this sudden change. That a person *may be* converted in an unlooked-for and sudden manner from sin to holiness in consequence of some event of God's providence is beyond all doubt ; but in those who were baptised in infancy and who have endeavoured to fulfil their baptismal promises we are not, in general, to look for those sudden and striking changes either of feeling or character, which were common among the early converts from the gross darkness and sensuality of the heathen world.

QUESTIONS.

To which of the Evangelists is this parable peculiar? Upon what occasion was it spoken? What connexion is there between this parable and that of the 'Sower'? What is the difference between them? When His instructions have been received into the heart what does Christ say they are like? [Seed planted in a good soil.] When He describes the process of the grain growing what does the Saviour mean by the 'blade'? [The green shoot that appears first when the grain rises above the ground.] What

is meant by the 'ear'? [That part which forms on the top of the blade or stalk to contain the fruit.] What is '*the full corn in the ear*'? [The kernels of grain that ripen just before the harvest, and of which the flour is made for bread.] What seems to have been Christ's design in this parable? [To show that holiness is gradual and progressive,—that it proceeds by successive stages, until the character is completely formed.] What special encouragement is here given to the preacher? By what are we here cautioned not to judge the preacher? How is this exemplified as to *want of success*? How exemplified as to success? What is the meaning of the words 'and should sleep'? What comparison is there between the sower and the preacher in this respect? What dangerous doctrine must not be drawn from this? [That no exertions on our part are necessary to cultivate the grace implanted.] Why should the preacher exercise faith and hope? 'He knoweth not how.' Illustrate the truth that the effect of the word preached is not dependent on the preacher. Show, however, that the work of the ministry is necessary. Compare the three stages of growth in the natural world with those in the spiritual. What may '*the green blade*' represent? What the *swelling ear*? And what the *full corn in the ear*? What is the result of patience or perseverance in the Christian life? How does the Spirit *ordinarily* work in man's heart? Show, however, that the increase must be a reality. What is meant by 'the harvest'? What by 'the sickle'? What must we not mistake for the work of grace in the heart? Who err in this respect? Show that this is unwarrantable. Show that it is highly dangerous.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

St. Matt. xiii. 44.

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he	hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
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NOTES.



THE parables of '*The Mustard Seed*' and '*The Leaven*' referred generally to the increase and operation of the Gospel in the whole world, so the two which follow, viz. those of '*The Hidden Treasure*' and '*The Precious Pearl*,' refer to the different classes of converts in this dispensation of grace. They also

show that the Gospel is not a matter which concerns mankind merely as a *race*, but that it is intended to affect *each individual* of that race.

The design of *both* parables is to show that the Gospel is the most valuable blessing which man can possess; *that*, in fact, which gives to this world its sole value.

The difference between them seems to consist in showing the various dispositions of two classes of converts to the truth of the Gospel previous to its being received by them.

In one of them the *treasure* is prominent, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure,' &c.; in the other, the *person* seeking it occupies the conspicuous place, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman.'

To some persons the Gospel may come unexpectedly, like a chance-found treasure, and impart a joy which induces the recipient to part at once with all his worldly wealth. For examples, consider the Gentiles (Rom. x. 20), the Samaritan woman (St. John iv.), and, generally, Christ's apostles.

Others again have been humble, industrious searchers after truth, have been engaged in the study of wisdom, and have thirsted after instruction; and to such the Gospel comes as a rich prize does to a merchant who is in search of valuable goods. For examples, consider Simeon and others in Jerusalem (St. Luke ii. 25-38). The Jews in general professed to be of this class, although the greater portion of them rejected the 'treasure of the Gospel' when offered, being unwilling to renounce the false notions which they had formed of their peculiar privileges, or to admit their want of righteousness.

The parable of 'The Hidden Treasure' is founded upon a widely prevalent custom in ancient times, when property was insecure, as has always been the case in Eastern countries. Men, either from avaricious motives, or from a dread of those revolutions which usually accompany changes of dynasty, were in the habit of burying their gold and precious property in the earth. With merchants it is said to have been a common practice, in such circumstances, to divide their property into three parts. One part they employed in commerce; another they exchanged for valuable jewels, which they could easily carry

with them if put to flight; and the third they buried in the earth, trusting no one with the secret of the place. In the event of their not returning, the hidden treasure was lost, unless some one in digging his field accidentally discovered it (Jer. xli. 8).

A knowledge of this practice will sometimes induce men to devote themselves to treasure-seeking, in the hope of becoming suddenly rich, instead of pursuing the occupations to which they have been accustomed (Job iii. 21; Prov. ii. 4). This, however, is not to be supposed in the present parable.

Some commentators suppose 'the Field' to be the *Holy Scriptures*, and 'the Treasure' the *way of salvation* revealed therein. Others think, and the opinion seems more probable, that by 'the Field' is meant the *Kingdom of Heaven upon earth*: viz. the Church, in which are to be found Christ and the blessings of the Gospel covenant, which surpass all earthly treasures (Ps. xix. 9, 10; Prov. iii. 13-15).

As the treasure could not be obtained without the field, so neither can the blessings of the Gospel be procured unless we are united to Christ's body, the Church. Hence the danger of 'false doctrine, heresy, and schism,' against which we pray to be preserved in the Litany. See I Cor. xii. 25; Eph. iv. 4-6; Col. iii. 15.

From the expression 'he hideth' we are not to imagine that he who has discovered the treasures of true wisdom and knowledge, which are in Christ, will desire to keep them to himself. On the contrary, it is only intended to mark the man's anxiety and care, lest he himself should lose them (St. John i. 41-46, iv. 22).

His 'joy' is the greater the more unexpected the discovery, and it is expressly mentioned here as being that which induces him to part with everything besides; no command nor compulsion being necessary (1 Pet. v. 2). See this exemplified in the first Christians (Acts ii. 44, 45; iv. 34, &c.); also in St. Paul (Phil. iii. 4-11). Such sacrifices were indispensable to the propagation of the Gospel, at a time when a few obscure men contended against the infidelity, the superstitions, and the prejudices of their age.

Although this personal sacrifice of wealth is not now

usually necessary, yet the willingness and readiness of the heart to give up all its possessions for the sake of Christ must still exist (St. Luke xiv. 33; St. Matt. x. 37). At all events, each person must give up any obstacle to his progress in the Divine life, even though it may be dear to him as his right eye (St. Matt. v. 29, 30; Heb. xii. 1). The lover of money must get rid of his covetousness; the lover of pleasure of his sinful indulgence; the wise man of his confidence in the wisdom of this world, &c. (Jer. ix. 23, 24).

The man in the parable 'bought the field,' evidently keeping the owner in ignorance of the treasure which it contained. This was an act of dishonesty, and therefore neither to be commended nor imitated. His *earnestness* in securing the treasure—his *fixed purpose* to obtain it at all cost—and his prudence in doing so, without affirming that the *manner* in which that prudence was exercised was praiseworthy or otherwise: these seem to be the points which are held up for imitation. Compare, in this respect, the parable of 'The Unjust Steward' (St. Luke xvi.); and that of 'The Importunate Widow and the Unjust Judge' (St. Luke xviii.)

The inestimable value of the blessings of the Gospel and of the salvation of the soul are taught without a parable, St. Matt. xvi. 26; Ps. xlix. 8.

We may learn from this parable how requisite it is to search diligently for true wisdom—to make any necessary sacrifices for the attainment of that heavenly treasure which enriches its possessor here, and which will lead him to glory hereafter. There is always a certain amount of visible reward, of reward which all can see and appreciate, which attends every self-sacrifice, every steady pursuit of duty to the disregard of self-gratification; but below all there is a treasure hidden, a peace which passeth all understanding, a song that none can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from earth (Rev. xiv. 3).

QUESTIONS.

What was Christ's parting injunction to His Apostles? [Go, teach *all nations*, &c.] What was John the Baptist's testimony of Christ? [Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin

of *the world*.] Will *a'l* persons in the world then be saved? [No. Many refuse to accept Christ as their Saviour, and prefer to continue in their sin.] Who, then, may alone entertain a good hope of being saved? [Those who are striving, to the full extent of their opportunities, to live and act as God's children.] What is the main design of this and the following parable? [To show that the Gospel is greater than *all* earthly treasures.] Do men usually acknowledge it to be such? [No; they choose rather to follow such treasures as this world offers.] What is the injunction of our Blessed Lord on this point? [Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.] In what respect do the parables of 'The Hidden Treasure' and 'The Precious Pearl' agree? In what does the difference between them chiefly consist? State the different ways in which the Gospel comes to individuals, and give examples of each. [(1) Rom. ix. 30, x. 20; (2) St. Luke ii. 25-38.] What did the Jews in general profess, and what was their conduct? From what did this conduct proceed? What revelation has God given us, to assist in our search after the hidden treasures of His grace? [Holy Scripture.] What further assistance is provided in the Church? [The Book of Common Prayer, public worship, &c.] May we expect to find the blessings of the Gospel without these? [No. In order to be filled with the fulness of God we must be united to Christ's mystical body, the Church.] From what, in connection with this point, do we pray in the Litany to be delivered? [False doctrine, heresy, and schism.] What is meant by false doctrine? [Something contrary to what has been revealed in Scripture.] What is meant by heresy? [An opinion which has been condemned by the Church.] What is meant by schism? [Separation from Christ's Church, on account of some matter or form of discipline which is not essential to salvation.] On what custom is the parable of 'The Hidden Treasure' founded? How did merchants usually divide their property, and why? What was sometimes a consequence of this? Illustrate this by a passage from Scripture. What occupation did a knowledge of this practice frequently give rise to? [Job iii. 21; Prov. ii. 4.] Is this to be supposed in regard to this parable? What interpretations have been given of 'the field' and 'the treasure' respectively? Show from Scripture the exceeding value of the treasure. What was necessary before the treasure could belong to the finder? What does this teach? What are we *not* to understand by the expression 'he hideth'? What does the expression really imply? What feeling was caused by the discovery? Why was it so great? What did this joy enable him to do? Give examples of this. Why were such sacrifices at

that time indispensable? Are such personal sacrifices usually expected now? What, however, is still necessary, if we would be really Christ's disciples? Quote passages from Scripture to prove that every obstacle to the reception and obedience of the Gospel must be given up. Give examples of such obstacles. Is any part of this man's conduct not to be imitated? Why? What are the points which are worthy of our imitation? Name some other parables which must be interpreted with a like caution. What passages of Scripture teach the same truth as this parable, in plain language? What line of conduct should we as Christians always seek to pursue? [Let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven.]


THE PRECIOUS PEARL.

St. Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls :

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

NOTES.

 HIS parable refers to the humble and industrious *seekers* after truth; such as Simeon and others, who were anxiously looking out for 'the consolation of Israel,' to illumine the darkness in which the nations were then enveloped (St. Luke ii. 25-38).

The apposite nature of the simile which is here used may be seen in the fact that, among the nations of the East, pearls were held in the highest estimation, and that traffic in them formed a considerable branch of merchandise.

The adjacent coasts of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, &c., whence pearls are obtained, rendered these articles of commerce familiar to the Jews, by whom they were used as ornaments (Job xxviii. 18; St. Matt. vii. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 9).

The merchant found but *one* pearl of inestimable value.

In this circumstance we may see the *absolute* importance of the 'one thing needful;' and the merely *relative* value of everything else in the world (St. Luke x. 38-42).

This pearl of great price may represent not merely heavenly wisdom in general, but also its Author, in whom are 'hid all the treasures of wisdom' (Col. ii. 3).

The exceeding excellency of this Divine Author and Giver of wisdom may be seen in the greatness of His *person*. He is 'perfect God and perfect Man. . . . not two, but one Christ.' It may also be seen in the greatness of His *work*. 'Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;' thereby manifesting the extent and depth of His love for man.

The excellency of Divine wisdom itself appears from its *effects*, when received into the heart; bestowing, as it does, present peace and happiness; and holding out the prospect of an unending life of future glory to all those who, like this merchant-man, 'sell all that they have' to possess it.

This blessing, like the pearl, must be *sought for*. It is to be found in God's most Holy Word; in hearing and reading it, and in meditating upon all the truths therein contained: also, in all the means of grace; such as attending God's service, the renewal and public ratification of our Baptismal vows in Confirmation, and a right and constant partaking of Holy Communion. For encouragement, see St. Matt. vii. 7; Prov. viii. 17.

The selling of all that we have, in order to the acquisition of this blessing, signifies the abandonment, if necessary, of all our possessions: whether *external*, such as property; or *internal*, such as opinions and customs.

This parting with all that we have formerly held dear is the only purchase-money which we have to give (see Is. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18).*

We can be at no difficulty in seeing from this parable that 'one thing is needful,' compared with which all that this world can offer or bestow is but as dust in the balance. If so, it behoves us to make, cheerfully, whatever sacrifices may be expedient or necessary for its attainment. Having

* This parable has sometimes been explained differently: viz. the merchant-man representing Christ—the pearl, the salvation of mankind, for which He emptied Himself of His glory, and, though rich, yet for our sakes became poor (Phil. ii. 7; 2 Cor. viii. 9).

once secured possession of this pearl of great price, we must watch over our treasure with all becoming earnestness and carefulness.

QUESTIONS.

What persons are described in this parable of the Precious Pearl? [Earnest seekers after truth.] Where may we find a true statement of what God wishes us to do in regard to our salvation? [In His revealed Word, the Bible.] What example have we in the New Testament of a person who was waiting the accomplishment of God's purposes to mankind? What precious object is the merchant in this parable represented as seeking? Was this an appropriate simile to use to our Lord's hearers? Why? In what places adjacent to Palestine are pearls procured? Among whom did they form an article of traffic? Who were in consequence familiar with them? How did the Jews use them? In what respect does this parable *agree* with that of 'The Hid Treasure?' In what does it *differ*? Quote some passages which show the excellency of the blessings of Christ's kingdom. What lesson of reproof does this merchant's conduct convey to us? How many pearls were found by this merchant-man? What lesson may we learn from this circumstance? [The importance of the *one* thing needful.] What is meant by this? [An interest in Christ's redemption, which far transcends every earthly treasure.—'What is a man profited,' &c.] What may we understand by this pearl of great price? Besides Heavenly Wisdom itself, whom may it also represent? [Our Blessed Lord, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.] How does His excellency appear? [In the greatness of His person as God and Man.] In what other way? [In the greatness of His work of redemption.] What is requisite on our part in order to the attainment of this Pearl? [Persistency in seeking.] What encouragement have we to search for it? What does the possession of this Divine Wisdom impart? [Present peace and happiness.] What future prospect does it offer? [An unending life of glory.] What did the merchant give up to obtain this pearl? What lesson may we learn from this circumstance? [That we should be ready to make any surrender for the attainment of so great a treasure.] Did our Saviour ever, in any case, command parting with property in order to become His disciple? [St. Luke xviii. 22.] Is this parting with all formerly held dear ever represented in Scripture as purchase-money? [Is. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18; Prov. xxiii. 23.]

THE DRAW-NET.

St. Matt. xiii. 47-50.

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind :

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

NOTES.



THE propriety of the similitude which is used in this parable may be seen in the fact that Our Saviour was speaking to fishermen, whose employment had been on the Sea of Galilee, which abounded with fish.*

The particular kind of net which is here referred to is that which is used for dragging or hauling, as distinguished from that which is cast into the water and then drawn back again (St. Matt. iv. 18). The drag-net was frequently of considerable length ; was loaded with some heavy substance to make it sink and sweep the bottom of the sea ; and was supported in a perpendicular position by floats on the surface of the water (see Hab. i. 15-17).

This parable is closely allied to that of 'The Tares in the Field ;' to which it has, in many points, a considerable resemblance. In several particulars, however, there are essential differences. In the parable of 'The Tares' 'the kingdom of heaven' is set forth as identical with the world—which eventually, of course, it will be : in 'The Net' it is described as a portion marked off within the world, but possessing a tendency to diffuse itself over the whole. In 'The Tares' the leading truth is the *present admixture* of good and bad in Christ's visible kingdom ; in 'The Net'

* 'And even the relics of the great fisheries—which once made the fame of Gennesaret—the two or three solitary fishermen casting their nets into the lake from its rocky banks, are enough to recall the image, which here alone, in inland Palestine, could have had a meaning : of the net which was "cast into the sea and gathered of every kind," from all the various tribes which still people those lonely shores.'—*Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine.'*

the leading truth is the *final separation*. In 'The Tares' men are forbidden to effect a separation; in 'The Net' 'God will one day,' &c. Whitby says, 'The scope of the Parable of the Net is not to show who, *at present*, belong to Christ's Kingdom; but who *hereafter* shall be excluded from future glory.'

Both, however, teach one lesson in common, viz.: that we are not at liberty to withdraw from communion with the Church upon the ground that wicked men outwardly belong to it. By the admixture, an opportunity for repentance is everywhere placed within reach of the sinful; while the good, by the exercise of their Christian graces, are carried towards perfection. The judgment of the Great Day will make an entire and endless separation between saints and sinners (S. Matt. xxv. 31—end).

By the *Net* we may understand *the visible Church of Christ*; and, by the *Sea*, into which it was cast, *this present world*, which it is eventually to overspread (Jer. xxxi. 34; Is. xi. 9).

Our Lord told the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Andrew, when He first called them, that He would make them 'fishers of men' (St. Matt. iv. 19). We may thus learn that Christ's ministers are the fishermen, and that the fish—men's souls and bodies—are to be brought into the net by the preaching of the Gospel, and by making known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

These evangelical fishermen take 'fish of every kind': *i.e.* men of every diversity of moral character have the Gospel preached to them, and find themselves within the limits of the visible Church (St. Matt. xxii. 10).

This Gospel Net will be full at the Judgment Day, when the number of God's elect will be accomplished (1 Cor. xv. 23, &c.).

By the 'sitting down' of those who are to make the separation is implied, that we shall be judged after a strict individual and impartial examination, and with no confused haste. (See St. Luke xiv. 28–31; St. Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. xx. 12.)

In this parable, the agents in the final separation are not specified; and, consequently, some have supposed that, as the fishermen are the same as those who ultimately set apart the good fish from the bad, so the apostles, who have been

made 'fishers of men,' shall themselves take that office in the General Judgment. In many passages of Scripture, however, we find the Holy Angels distinctly named as the agents (St. Matt. xiii. 41, xxiv. 31, xxv. 31). In the other parables which treat of the Judgment Day, there is also a clear distinction made between the *present* ministers of the Kingdom and the *future* executioners of wrath. See St. Matt. xiii. 27-30 (servants, reapers); St. Matt. xxii. 3-13 (servants, attendants); and St. Luke xix. 13-24 (servants, them that stood by).

By the 'vessels' into which the good fish are gathered are intended the 'many mansions of bliss' (St. John xiv. 2); the 'everlasting habitations' (St. Luke xvi. 9); the 'better country' (Heb. xi. 16); the 'city which hath foundations' (Heb. xi. 10); in short, perfect and everlasting joy and glory.

The bad fish were 'cast away.' Among the Jews this was especially necessary, since many kinds of fish were to them unclean. (Lev. xi. 9-12). These they would naturally throw aside out of the boat upon the beach to decay or become food for the fowls (Ezek. xxxii. 3, 4). 'Cast out' is a frequent expression in Holy Scripture, signifying that the Church is, or at all events will be, a holy enclosure, into which nothing unclean has a right to enter, and in which nothing unclean will at last be found (St. Mark iv. 11; Col. iv. 5; St. John vi. 37, xii. 31, xv. 6; Rev. xxii. 15).

After this final casting out of everything unclean, those prophecies which relate to the glorious nature of Christ's Church will be fully accomplished; such as Is. xxxv. 8, lii. 1, lx. 21; Joel iii. 17, &c.

From this parable we may learn the necessity for *personal holiness*. No one should rest satisfied with the mere admission by baptism into Christ's Church; nor think that he has done all that is required from him, by *saying*, Lord, Lord! Christianity is both *personal* and *practical*; and claims from its members the single eye and a life-long service. We must therefore endeavour to prove the reality of our faith by the sincerity and number of our works; and must seek for God's grace in all those ways which He has prescribed. We must seek it in Confirmation, for we require *strength*,—we must seek it in Holy Communion, for we require

nourishment. All our pains and care are not more than enough to keep us within the Net, so that at last we may, by the merits of our only Saviour, receive that crown of glory which the Lord the righteous Judge shall then give to all those who have loved Him, and patiently waited for His appearing (Rom. ii. 6, 7; 2 Tim. ii. 19-21, and iv. 8).

QUESTIONS.

Why is the comparison in this parable a strikingly appropriate one? On what sea did the Apostles usually practise their calling? Describe the kind of net which is here spoken of. Is such a net spoken of anywhere else in Scripture? Quote the passage. What other of our Lord's parables closely resembles this? What is meant by the 'Kingdom of Heaven' in the parable of 'The Tares'? Why? What different meaning has the parable of 'The Net'? What diffusive property, however, does 'The Net' possess? What is the leading truth contained in the parable of 'The Tares'? What is that which is taught in this parable of 'The Net'? What other differences may be observed in these parables? What sin is forbidden by both parables? Prove from Scripture that, in what may be considered the most carefully selected company, evil will be found. Would this fact in the case of Judas have been a satisfactory justification for not following Christ? Where only may we expect to have a perfect fellowship of saints? What, in this parable, does the net represent? What is meant by the Sea into which it is cast? What will the Net eventually do? Where have we a prediction of this? [Jer. xxxi. 34; Is. xi. 9.] Who are intended by the fish? and who by the fishermen? How are men to be brought into the Net? What kinds of fish were taken? What does this represent? What other of our Lord's parables teaches the same truth? When will the Net be *full*? What is implied in the 'sitting down'? What other passages teach us that a strict judicial examination will take place at the last? Who are to be the principal agents engaged in this final separation? Will those who are now the fishermen take any active part? What other parables clearly distinguish between the present Ministers of the Kingdom and the future Ministers of Vengeance? ['The Tares,' 'The Marriage Feast,' and 'The Pounds.'] What is meant by 'the vessels'? Quote some other expressions for the same thing. [St. John xiv. 2; St. Luke xvi. 9; Heb. xi. 10, 16; St. Matt. xiii. 30.] What was done with the *bad* fish? Why

was this especially necessary among the Jews? What does this expression 'cast out' imply? What prophecies will then be fulfilled? What great practical lesson may we learn from this parable? How should we endeavour to prepare ourselves for dwelling in heaven? [By leading godly, righteous, and sober lives.] What will assist us in our endeavours to accomplish this? [The use of such means of grace as God has mercifully provided for His children.] Name some of these. [Hearing and reading God's word, going to church, praying, receiving the Holy Communion, &c.]

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

St. Luke x. 30-37.

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31 And by chance here came down a certain Priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on *him*, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on *him*,

34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

NOTES.



THE circumstance that gave rise to this beautiful parable was a question which a lawyer put to our Lord. The lawyers or scribes (compare St. Matt. xxii. 35, with St. Mark xii. 28; and St. Luke v. 17, with verse 21) were public writers of the Law, which they also read and explained to the people. As Jewish instruction at the time of our Saviour's ministry consisted chiefly of traditions, the greater number of these scribes belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, with whom we almost always find them associated in Scripture. They

prided themselves very much upon their knowledge of the Law, and their manner of teaching it. They thought that they alone had the key of wisdom, and sat in Moses' seat (St. Luke xi. 45, &c. ; St. Matt. xxiii. 2).

The design of the question put to the Saviour by this lawyer was, as we are told, to *tempt Him*; which may mean nothing more than to try Him with a question which would bring out whatever might be peculiar in His opinions, as it is difficult to see anything decidedly wicked, or ensnaring, in asking, 'What shall I do' &c.? Our Saviour, however, was never wholly free from the open attacks or the secret machinations of His enemies to entangle Him in His doctrine or discourse (St. Matt. xxii. 15-22; St. Luke xi. 53, 54).

The question itself is, in this case, the most important that can be asked. It is the same as that which was put by the young ruler (St. Mark x. 17); by our Lord's disciples (St. John vi. 28); and by the jailer at Philippi (Acts xvi. 30). In answering the question, our Lord refers the lawyer to that law with which he professed to be conversant, and which he was expected to teach (compare St. John iii. 10; Rom. ii. 21). The lawyer at once brings forward the passages—Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18—which another scribe quoted in a similar manner (St. Mark xii. 33). The former of these passages was one of four which were written on the phylacteries (Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21; Exod. xiii. 9, 16): and which also formed a portion of the daily morning and evening service of the synagogue. This may account in some measure for the readiness of the lawyer's answer.

The reply gained our Lord's approbation, who immediately urged the lawyer to reduce his knowledge to practice; assuring him that eternal life lay in fulfilling the command (compare Lev. xviii. 5; Gal. iii. 12; and see St. Mark xii. 34).

The lawyer, inwardly conscious of his deficiencies, yet at the same time desirous of making a show of devotion, asks, 'But who is my neighbour?'—a question which there was no necessity to put, if he had been anxious to exercise that perfect love which is the fulfilling of the law.

The narrow notions of the Jews led them to despise all

those who were not the natural descendants of Abraham (St. Matt. v. 43), and to pride themselves upon their relationship to that patriarch (St. Matt. iii. 9; St. John viii. 33).

As an answer to the lawyer's question, and in order to correct such selfish principles, by showing the extent and comprehensiveness of the relationship in which every individual stands to his fellow-men, our Lord relates the parable of 'The Good Samaritan,' in which nothing more is said of the *object* of love, which the lawyer had asked after, but only an example given of one who *exercises* love.

The scenery of the story is laid with great propriety in the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, which ran for the most part through a wild and rocky country, much infested by robbers; and which, from the frequency with which murders and other outrages were committed, was called 'the red or bloody way.' Being the high road to Perea, it was much used for purposes of traffic, and was frequently travelled by priests (a great number of whom lived at Jericho), while going up to Jerusalem to keep their course in the temple service (1 Chron. xxiv. 10-19; Neh. xii.).

The person whom the robbers assaulted may be looked upon as a *Jew*: as in this case it will, on the one hand, be the more striking that the priest and Levite refused him their help; and, on the other hand, that the Samaritan gave him assistance, when he might so easily have availed himself of a sophistical excuse (St. John iv. 9).

The priests were those appointed to offer sacrifice, to pray for and bless the people. Before the giving of the Law, the fathers or heads of families, kings, and princes, officiated as priests in their own houses or cities.

After the Exodus, God claimed as His own the first-born of every family in Israel, in commemoration of the Destroying Angel having passed over *them* when he slew the first-born of the Egyptians (Exod. xiii. 2, xxiv. 5).

While Moses, however, was in the mount receiving the Law, God Himself selected the family of Aaron 'to minister in the priest's office' (Exod. xxviii. 1, &c.).

The priests were presided over by a high priest, whose peculiar privilege and duty it was to officiate on 'The

Great Day of Atonement' (Lev. xvi.). In this respect he was a type of Christ.*

This Priest, who was probably in high estimation with the people, 'passed by on the other side;' although from his office, and from the duties in which, probably, he had been recently engaged, we might have supposed that he would have been the last person to have acted thus. For an account of the law of compassion, which was obligatory on *every* Israelite, and, therefore, peculiarly so on the ministers of religion, see Deut. xxii. 4; Exod. xxiii. 5.

The Levites comprised the whole of the descendants of Levi, except the family of Aaron. We have seen that God claimed the first-born *generally* to be His peculiar servants: but, while Moses was on the Mount, the Israelites committed idolatry; and the Levites, on account of the noble stand which they made against it, were set apart for God's service instead of the first-born (Exod. xxxii. 26-29). In memory, however, of His *right* to the service of the first-born of all the other tribes, God commanded that they should be redeemed (Num. iii. 44, &c., viii. 15, &c.).

By the uncharitable manner in which both the Priest and the Levite acted towards a fellow-creature, who, even according to their own selfish views, was a *neighbour*, our Saviour intended to show the truth of His own words, St. Luke xvi. 16. Such, in general, at that period were the Jewish priests, as represented in the Gospel history; minutely and scrupulously exact and zealous in ritual observances, but careless and neglectful about the weightier matters of the law (St. Matt. xxiii. 23).

* The points of likeness and of contrast between the High Priest and Christ are thus stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews:—

SIMILARITY.

- (1.) Both are able to have compassion, having been themselves tempted (iv. 15, v. 2).
- (2.) Both were called of God (v. 4, 5, 10).
- (3.) Both offered gifts and sacrifices for sin (v. 1, viii. 3).

CONTRAST.

- (1.) One was sinful, the other without sin (iv. 15, v. 3, vii. 26, 27).
- (2.) One was *for a time*, the other is an *eternal* priest (v. 6, vii. 16, 23, 24).
- (3.) One offered the blood of bulls and goats, which can never take away sin; the other offered up His own blood (ix. 12-15, 25, x. 3, 4, 19).

The 'Samaritans' were the descendants of those strangers whom the King of Assyria placed in those portions of Palestine which had formerly been inhabited by the Ten tribes.

In the year 721 B.C. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, overthrew the kingdom of Israel, carrying great part of the population captive into his own dominions. This captivity was completed, about forty years afterwards, by Esarhaddon, who had annexed Babylon to Assyria. These conquerors substituted, in the place of those taken prisoners, some colonists from various localities in their own territories (2 Kings xvii.); and from this period history affords no trace of the descendants of the Ten tribes.

These Assyrian colonists having at first worshipped the idols to which they had been accustomed in their native land, God punished their idolatry by sending lions among them. To avert this judgment, they sent to the King of Assyria, entreating him to send them a priest from among the captive Jews, who might teach them 'the manner of the God of the land.' This request was granted; the result was, that they paid a kind of worship to Jehovah, and at the same time served other gods: the former they worshipped from motives of policy, the latter from habit or attachment. Still, a knowledge of Jehovah was thus kept up; and in process of time His worship seems to a certain extent to have become predominant in the land. The descendants of these colonists were the people who were afterwards called *Samaritans*.

The offer of the Samaritans to assist the Two tribes on their return from the Babylonish captivity in building the temple being refused, they endeavoured, in every possible way, to hinder the work (Ezra iv. 1-6). And some time after Manasses, son-in-law of Sanballat, being driven from Jerusalem (Neh. xiii. 28), built, with the assistance of his father-in-law, a rival temple on Mount Gerizim (St. John iv. 20), in which he became the first high priest.

The Samaritans acknowledged only the books of Moses. They rejected all other parts of the sacred volume, because they restricted the Divine worship to Jerusalem.

For these reasons, added to the fact that they were aliens in blood, the most bitter enmity existed between the Jews and Samaritans, which was in full vigour five

hundred years afterwards, suspending all commercial and friendly intercourse (St. John iv. 9, viii. 48; St. Luke ix. 53, &c.).

Our Saviour, on one occasion, commended the conduct of a Samaritan, in the presence of the Jews, to show them the unreasonableness of this enmity (St. Luke xvii. 17, 18); and, doubtless for the same reason, he introduced a Samaritan into this parable.

Most carefully delineated is the compassionate treatment which the despised Samaritan bestows upon the suffering stranger. 'Oil and wine' were the ancient medicaments applied to wounds, and used in surgical cases. As the 'inn,' or caravanserai, furnished nothing but rooms for shelter, the Samaritan had, as was usual, provided himself with the necessary stores for travelling (Gen. xlii. 27; Judges xix. 18, 19; St. Matt. xv. 32), out of which, as long as he was with him, he supplied the wounded Jew with everything necessary; committing him to the care of the innkeeper for his subsequent wants, leaving a sum of money, and giving a promise to repay any further expense that might be incurred.

The lawyer had asked who the 'neighbour' was to whom support should be given—our Saviour reverses the question, and asks, 'Who was neighbour to the wounded man: he who exercised love, or they who refused to do so?' He thus teaches the great lesson that love is not confined and measured by the *object* on which it is exercised, but has its own measure in itself; that 'it is like the sun, which does not ask on what it shall shine, or what it shall warm, but shines and warms by the very law of its own being, so that there is nothing hidden from its light and from its heat.'

The question arose so naturally out of the story that the lawyer found it impossible to assert that either the Priest or the Levite had acted a neighbourly part, even according to their own contracted ideas of the word 'neighbour,' but was constrained to acknowledge that the Samaritan alone had been the man's neighbour; and, consequently, to admit the reciprocal and corresponding obligation of a Jew to act a like generous and compassionate part towards a Gentile or Samaritan in similar circumstances.

The great lesson intended to be taught by this parable is, that every one with whom we come in contact is to be looked upon as a neighbour, and is, therefore, entitled to our sympathy and kind offices. See the same truth taught without a parable, St. Matt. v. 43-48; also Acts xvii. 26.

We also learn that our charity should be active and practical, not consisting merely of words and professions (see 1 Tim. i. 5; St. James ii. 15; 1 Pet. iv. 8). It must not, however, be ostentatious, like that of the Pharisees (St. Matt. vi. 2-4).

We also learn, not to be weary in well-doing (Gal. vi. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 13); but to continue our good offices to those who stand in need of them as long as their situation may require them.

Our example in 'doing likewise' is that Divine Teacher Himself who enjoins it. In the compassionate conduct of the Samaritan we may easily trace a figurative representation of the Blessed Saviour's work of mercy and love.

QUESTIONS.

What gave rise to this parable being spoken? Who were these lawyers? By what other name are they known? In what did the learning of the Jews at that time chiefly consist? To what sect among the Jews did the Scribes principally belong? On what did they greatly pride themselves? What does our Lord assert of them in this respect? How had they abused their office? What was this Lawyer's object in asking the question of our Lord? What may the word 'tempt' here mean? Why may it have this meaning? Give examples to show that the Saviour was frequently subject to the attacks of His enemies. Was the question upon this occasion a very important one? By whom were similar questions put upon other occasions? To what does our Lord here refer the Lawyer for an answer? What did our Lord say, in like manner, to Nicodemus? What did St. Paul also say to the Romans? What reply was made by the Lawyer? Were these two passages ever conjoined on any other occasion? What enabled the Lawyer to give so prompt an answer? What were the phylacteries? Quote an instance of our Lord taking notice of these. Did our Saviour approve of the Lawyer's reply? How did he now answer the original question? What reply did the Lawyer make? What was probably his motive? What, generally, were the notions of the Jews on this subject? How did our Saviour answer the

Lawyer's second question? What, then, was the design of this parable? Where are the incidents supposed to have occurred? What was the nature of that district of country? What evil name did it bear? Why? Who used this road for purposes of traffic? By whom, also, was it much frequented? What countryman may we suppose the traveller to have been? What was the office of the priesthood? Who officiated as priests in early times? After the Exodus, whom did God claim for this service? Why? What family did God afterwards select for the priesthood? When? How many classes of Priests were there? What duty was restricted to the High Priest? Describe the chief ceremonies connected with the great Day of Atonement. [Lev. xvi.] Of whom was the High Priest, in this respect, a type? Wherein did the similarity consist? Mention the points of dissimilarity. Quote passages to show that Christ was without sin. What was the conduct of this Priest towards the wounded traveller? What was peculiarly unbecoming in this conduct? How did the Law instruct *every* Israelite to compassionate distress? Upon whom, then, was this law doubly binding? Who were the Levites? What was their office? Relate the circumstances connected with their being set apart to God's service. What command did God give with reference to the first-born of the *other tribes*? Why may our Lord have selected a Priest and a Levite in this parable? What words of Christ did their conduct in this instance verify? Who next passed by? Who were the Samaritans? What became finally of the Ten tribes? Who completed the conquest? Who were substituted by the conquerors in the place of those carried away captive? What worship did these people set up? How were they punished? What did they do in consequence? With what result? What were the descendants of these colonists afterwards called? What became of the remaining two tribes? When did they return? What offers of assistance did they then receive? Relate the circumstances. What happened soon after to widen the breach? What sacred books did the Samaritans reject? Why? In what estimation were the Samaritans held by the Jews in the time of our Saviour? Show that this hatred was mutual. How did the Samaritan in the parable act towards the wounded Jew? How did he happen to have these necessary things at hand? What were oil and wine anciently used for? What was the subsequent conduct of this Samaritan? Why did our Lord select a Samaritan? Did He, on any other occasion, commend the conduct of a Samaritan? What question did our Saviour now put to the Lawyer? Why did He reverse the Lawyer's question? What was the Lawyer constrained to

acknowledge? What obligation did he thereby admit? What did our Saviour then bid him do? What principal lesson may we learn from this parable? Where else do we find the same truth inculcated? What does this parable teach in regard to the nature of our charity? Whose charity must it not resemble? Who is our great example in this as in all other duties? Of what may the parable be considered as a representation? What wounds did He bind up? Was He ever reviled as a Samaritan? On what occasion?

THE RICH FOOL.

St. Luke xii. 16-21.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

NOTES.

ON one occasion, while our Lord was warning His disciples against fearfulness in publishing His Gospel, on account of the dangers to which they would thereby be exposed, He was interrupted by a request from one of His hearers: viz. that He would undertake to arbitrate between his brother and himself.

Among the Jews, the elder brother had two shares, or twice as much of the heritable property as any of the other children (Deut. xxi. 17). The remaining portion was equally divided among the others. Whether this man had any legal claim upon his brother's possessions, or wished to defraud him by means of the Saviour's influence and authority, does not appear from the narrative. In either case, as also appears from the unseasonableness of the request, *covetousness*, the root of all evil (1 Tim. vi. 10), was the

motive by which he was actuated; and this very prevalent sin may display itself quite as truly in the spirit or temper in which we hold or reclaim *our own*, as in the undue desire or wrongful appropriation of that which belongs to others.

In His reply our Lord evidently alludes to the conduct of Moses (Exod. ii. 14); and intimates that neither on this occasion nor on any other would He Himself assume a legislative authority or a judicial power to decide in any question which related to matters of civil jurisdiction. (See St. John xviii. 36; St. Matt. xxii. 21.)

In thus refusing to arbitrate, our Lord does not, of course, condemn any recourse to arbitration in matters of dispute instead of going to law. On the contrary, see His own precept upon this subject, St. Matt. xviii. 15-17: see, also, St. Paul's recommendation in favour of this mode of reconciling differences, 1 Cor. vi. 1-6.

Next comes the moral of the parable, which is prefixed to it in the form of a serious caution to this man, and to all of similar disposition. The words of caution are doubled—'Take heed and beware'—to signify both the great danger of this sin of covetousness and the great care which men should exercise in order to preserve themselves from its guilt, since it is often concealed under the name and the appearance of virtues; such as *frugality*, &c.

Our Saviour frequently and earnestly calls attention to the danger of this sin of covetousness: *i. e.* an immoderate love of the things of this world, however lawfully acquired (St. Mark x. 24: see, also, Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5, 6).

The cases of Achan, Gehazi, Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira, are awful instances of the wickedness and punishment of this sin.

Our Lord enforces His injunction with a very powerful reason:—'A man's life consisteth not,' &c.*

In the parable of 'The Sower' a worldly temper is represented as a great obstruction to religious growth and improvement, by choking the good seed; and, consequently, as being highly *sinful* and offensive to God. In the present

* In the Greek language the word *Βίος* signifies the life which we live, or our manner of living, and this we may derive from earthly possessions; the word *Ζωή* signifies the life *by which* we live, and this we derive only from God, and can retain only as long as He pleases. The latter word is the one which is used in this parable.

parable are pointed out the *folly* and *danger* of this passion, even without regard to a future state.

'The *ground* of a certain rich man,' &c. The chief wealth of the Jews consisted in the produce of their lands; their olives, vineyards, sheep, and oxen. The word in the original language (*χωρα*) signifies a large and extensive territory. This man's fields were naturally fertile, and, being also well cultivated, produced even beyond his expectations; beyond what he had provided for. We are taught by this not to measure the favour of God by the abundance of the things of this life, as these are frequently given in order to try and prove mankind; and sometimes become, by the way in which they are abused, curses instead of blessings.

This man's abundance only increased his anxiety and care, and ensnared him in deeper worldliness. His *thoughts* were at work, and God observed them (Heb. iv. 13). Evil thoughts precede evil actions; and these, in the end, produce death (St. James i. 15). We may here learn that increase in worldly goods is that which chiefly creates and fosters covetousness, serving as fuel to feed the fire instead of water to quench it (Eccles. v. 13). In this, as in most other respects, the Psalmist exhibits an intimate knowledge of the human heart (Ps. lxii. 10).

In answer to the complaint of the rich man, that he had no room to bestow his goods, St. Ambrose, in his exposition of the passage, tells him to employ for this purpose 'the bosoms of the needy, the houses of widows, and the mouths of infants.' By acting thus, he would have been merely shifting his treasure from earth to heaven; making to himself 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;' providing for himself 'bags that wax not old,' &c. (St. Luke xvi. 9; xii. 33: see also our Saviour's precept, St. Matt. vi. 19; that of the son of Sirach, Eccles. xxix. 12; and that of St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18; and, also, the Offertory Sentences in the Office for Holy Communion).

The parable next informs us of the result of this man's anxious thoughts: viz., the enlargement of his barns; a measure *in itself* most wise and reasonable, for laying up in safety what God had so liberally bestowed. *Prudence* and *carefulness* in using the gifts of Providence are no less our duty than *industry* and *diligence* in acquiring them. See this exemplified in Joseph, Gen. xli. 33, &c.; and in our Saviour

Himself, St. John vi. 12: see, also, Prov. vi. 6-8; 2 Cor. xii. 14. Yet this man is called by God Himself a *fool*; and his folly appears in the following particulars:—

(1.) In thinking that all his wealth was his own absolute, independent property: *my* fruits, *my* barns, *my* goods. In one sense they were his, undoubtedly, that is, as far as his *neighbours* were concerned; but, in respect of *God*, they were a sacred trust for which he was accountable. This forgetfulness of their dependence upon God constitutes a peculiar danger of the rich (Deut. viii. 17, 18; Prov. xxx. 8, 9).

(2.) In thinking that, when his goods were laid up in his new granaries, he was secure of plenty for the time to come (Ecclus. v. 1); forgetting that from a variety of occurrences, which human wisdom can neither foresee nor prevent, the most wealthy may be reduced to sudden and unexpected poverty (Job i. 21; Prov. xxiii. 5).

(3.) In thinking that, after his wealth was thus secured, he should then be at ease and enjoy himself. Thus the slaves of covetousness and ambition sacrifice present ease and tranquillity, in anticipation of pleasure to come; and are, for the most part, rewarded with disappointment, if not with bitter remorse.*

(4.) In the *kind* of gratifications from which he expected so much happiness: viz. sensual pleasures. In addressing his soul, he brings it down to a level with the beasts that perish, making only 'provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof' (Rom. xiii. 14). Compare the conduct of the ancient libertines, Isa. xxii. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 32.

(5.) In thinking himself sure of long life, both for finishing his extensive projects and for enjoying the fruits of his labours. While indulging in these contemplations, the decree went forth that on that very night he should be cut off by a sudden and unexpected blow. Compare Dan. iv. 31 and St. Matt. vi. 25. In the expression, 'thy soul shall be required, literally, *demand*ed, of thee,' is intimated, both that God, who gave him his soul only

* This was strikingly illustrated in the story of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, who, on relating to his friend Cineas his projects for conquering Sicily, Africa, and many other countries, was asked by him, 'What shall we do then?' 'Then,' said the prince, 'we shall live.' 'That we can do now,' was the reply.

as a deposit, shall demand it of him as a thing *not his own*; and, also, the *reluctance* with which he would part with his riches and possessions (Job xxvii. 8; Prov. xiv. 32: see, also, Wisdom xv. 8; Ecclus. xli. 1). When the righteous man dies, he *commits* his soul, pleased and rejoicing, to God, as the Father of Spirits (Ps. xxxi. 5; Acts vii. 59); but the life of the wicked is represented as *torn* from him by violence and yielded up with the utmost reluctance.

(6.) His folly is still further marked by the circumstance that death not only stripped *him* of his possessions, but transferred them to *others* without his consent or knowledge: 'then whose shall those things be?' &c. Solomon takes particular notice of this circumstance, as a striking proof of the vanity of hoarding up riches through avarice (Eccles. ii. 18, 19, 26: see, also, Ps. xlix. 16-20, xxxix. 6; Job xxvii. 16, 17).

The parable concludes with the same moral sentiment which is prefixed to it, only expressed in different words, 'So is he that layeth up treasure,' &c.: *i. e.* every man who acts on a similar principle—pursuing the same plan of happiness—is equally foolish with the rich man in the parable. He 'lays up treasure for himself,' *i. e.* merely for the gratification of his own sensual appetites; and, whatever he may be in the eye of man, in the sight of God he is poor, and an object for pity rather than envy: being destitute of those hidden treasures of 'wisdom and righteousness,' which are the only true and durable riches of the soul (St. Luke xvi. 11; compare Rev. iii. 17, 18).

On the other hand, he only is truly rich who is 'rich towards God,' *i. e.* whose treasures are laid up in heaven with God (Prov. xix. 17), 'where moth and rust corrupt not' (St. Matt. vi. 20); for when he dies he does not lose his riches, but enters on their full possession (Phil. i. 21-23).

Our Lord—knowing that covetousness often proceeds from a distrust in God's providential care—gives us, in the words that follow the parable, the best preservative against all such over-anxious thoughts: viz. an assurance of the love and care of our Heavenly Father (vers. 22-32).

QUESTIONS.

What gave rise to this parable? How had our Saviour been employed at the time? What was He asked to do by the man? Why did he ask Christ to make this division? [Because he saw that He had great authority, and thought that others would obey Him.] What was the law of inheritance among the Jews? What motive influenced this man in making the request? [Covetousness.] What does St. Paul call this sin? In what two ways may it manifest itself? To what occurrence in Old Testament history does our Lord allude in His reply? What did He mean to intimate by this? [That it was not His office to decide questions relating to matters of *civil* right or wrong.] Was His conduct on other occasions regulated by similar motives? Does our Lord here condemn arbitration in disputed matters? Prove that He does not? What does our Saviour prefix to the parable? [Its moral, in the form of a caution to this man and to all others of a similar disposition.] Why are the words of caution doubled? [To intimate the great danger of the sin of covetousness, and the care which we should exercise in preserving ourselves from it.] Prove from Scripture the danger and sin of an immoderate love of riches. Give examples of this. In what words does our Saviour enforce His injunction? ['A man's *life* consisteth not, &c.] In what sense is the word *life* used in this passage? [As that which is derived from God and retained only as long as He pleases.] Explain the difference between a worldly temper as exhibited in this parable and in that of 'The Sower.' In what did the wealth of the Jews principally consist? What does the word translated 'ground' here signify? What does this man's prosperity in worldly things teach us? For what purpose are these things often given? What is frequently the result? What did this man's abundance cause in his mind? Quote a passage showing that God marks even our *thoughts*. In what do evil thoughts often end? [In evil deeds.] How does an increase of worldly goods act upon a covetous disposition? How did the Psalmist, in this respect, show his knowledge of the human heart? What was the result of this man's anxious thoughts in this matter? Was this measure wrong in itself? Prove this. In how many particulars was the rich man's folly manifested? What is the *first* of these? ['*My goods.*'] What were these things in reality? What is a peculiar danger of the rich? What is the *second* mark of folly? What is the experience of every-day life on this subject? What is the *third* mark of folly? What do covetous and ambitious people sacrifice? What is

generally the result of this conduct? What is the *fourth* mark of folly? In what kind of gratifications does he expect happiness? Instead of providing for his *soul*, as he said, what was he only doing? Are there any who act in a similar way at the present time? Give examples of this class of men from Scripture. What is the *fifth* mark of folly? Prove from Scripture that dependence on futurity is common among men. What was in reality this man's case? Illustrate the uncertainty of life or happiness. What is the correct and full meaning of 'thy soul shall be required of thee'? Give illustrations of these. Contrast with these the death of the righteous. How is this rich man's case verified every day? What is the *sixth* mark of folly? ['Then whose shall,' &c.] Who takes particular notice of this circumstance? Why? Illustrate this from other passages of Scripture. How does the parable conclude? What is the meaning of the words 'so is he,' &c.? What is implied in 'treasure for himself'? What in 'rich toward God'? What does St. Paul say of this? From what did our Lord know that covetousness often proceeded? What encouragement against this does He give His disciples? [Verses 22-32.] From what do we learn here that every rich man must be separated? In how many ways may this be? Who alone can with propriety use the words of this rich man, 'Soul, thou hast much goods,' &c.? Why? While comparatively indifferent to worldly things, what ought we always to seek earnestly and constantly? ['The kingdom of God,' &c.] We ought to obey God's commands and imitate the Saviour's example; that we may enter, when we die, upon the possession of a heavenly inheritance.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

St. Luke xiii. 6-9.

6 He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this

fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

NOTES.



FROM the first verse of this chapter we learn that, as Jesus was speaking, some of His hearers came up and reported a cruel and tyrannical act of violence which had been committed by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Some people of Galilee, having come up to Jerusalem to worship, in accordance with the injunctions of the Law (Deut. xvi. 16), were slain by his order while in the very act of offering sacrifice, the sanctity of the temple being thereby violated. The turbulent character of the Galileans—of which an instance is recorded in Acts v. 37—may have given a pretext for this outrage; and it is conjectured by some, that, as these Galileans were Herod's subjects, this murder was the cause of that discord between the governors, which is mentioned in St. Luke xxiii. 12.

The mention of this circumstance probably arose from that prevalent tendency in mankind to pass a rash and uncharitable judgment upon the calamities of their neighbours, especially if they are the objects of hatred or prejudice (see Job iv. 7, viii. 6; St. John ix. 2). To check this censorious spirit, our Saviour puts them in mind of another tragical event: viz. the destruction of eighteen of their own fellow-citizens by an immediate act of Providence. As the Jews, especially those resident in Jerusalem, valued themselves above the rest of mankind, and despised, in particular, the Galileans, nothing could better answer the Saviour's purpose. If it would be reckoned harsh and presumptuous to

ascribe the fate of these eighteen Jews to the wrath of God, on account of atrocious guilt *on their part*, it could not be less presumptuous and unaccountable to pass so severe a censure in the case of the Galileans.

In *both* of these instances our Saviour indignantly rejects the uncharitable assumption, and leads His hearers to the right use to be made of the misfortunes of others. He teaches that they are not to consider themselves as more righteous than the sufferers, but as more mercifully dealt with, since God might as justly have visited these evils upon them. The distresses of others thus become a message of warning, and a powerful motive to repentance.

By the words 'above all the Galileans,' and 'above all men,' our Saviour intimates that they *were* sinners, and *might*, in this way, be justly cut off by God: but even if they had been, this did not prove them to be worse than many who were spared; since God might delay the punishment of the others, in order to give them time for repentance, or that they might fill up the measure of their iniquities, or for some other sufficient reason (see Gen. xv. 16; St. Matt. xxiii. 32).

The original word which is translated 'likewise' in the 3rd verse is not the same as that in the 5th. In the second instance it means simply 'also,' 'as well;' this is of course the meaning we usually give to the word 'likewise.' In the first case it means 'in like manner.' This is the strict sense of 'likewise,' for it should be remembered that 'likewise' is 'like ways,' *i. e.* 'in a like way.' And this is the literal meaning of the word in the 3rd verse, and it is probably intended as a prophecy of the approaching miseries of the impenitent Jewish people, when the Romans should take away their place and nation, and their blood should *likewise* be mingled with their sacrifices.

To illustrate the forbearance and long-suffering of God, and, at the same time, to mark the object and the limits of that forbearance, our Saviour delivers the following parable.

The figures of the vine and fig-tree are very often used by the inspired writers, and are applied by them both in metaphor and parable to God's ancient people (Ps. lxxx.; Is. v.; Hosea x. 1). These two trees are also frequently classed together in Scriptural descriptions of nature (Joel

ii. 22). To dwell under one's own vine or fig-tree, represents a time of happiness and prosperity, of safety and security (1 Kings iv. 25; Mic. iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10). To have these emblems of peace and happiness uprooted was the sign of misery and desolation, and of the loss of the Divine favour (Ps. lxxx. 14-16; Joel i. 7-12). Hence, upon another occasion, our Lord made use of a fig-tree as an emblem or type of the Jewish nation (St. Mark xi. 12, 14).

By the 'fruit' which was sought, we are to understand a holy life, manifesting itself in love to God and love to man. In the fifth chapter of Isaiah there is a very similar parable to this, with the interpretation. The necessity of personal holiness is taught in Heb. xii. 14; St. James i. 27, ii. 26.

The fault of this fig-tree was twofold: the owner had come three years successively, making further trials, and still being disappointed; and, besides being thus unprofitable, it was injurious to the growth and fruitfulness of the trees around it. It 'cumbered' the ground: *i. e.* (as the original word signifies)* it rendered the ground unproductive, and prevented the other trees from deriving that vital nourishment from the soil which was essential to their fertility. This was the case with the Jewish nation: through them the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom. ii. 24; St. Matt. xxiii. 13). This appears clearly from heathen writers, who never mention the Jews but in terms of hatred or contempt, as enemies of the human race. Hence one cause of the persecutions of the early Christians, who were regarded as a sect of the Jews. On this account it was necessary that the Jewish state should be removed, in order to the establishment of the Christian Church.

The command to 'cut down' the tree would, to a Jew especially, mark its utter worthlessness; since by the Law no fruit-bearing tree, even of those belonging to an enemy, might be cut down, unless in a case of absolute necessity (Deut. xx. 19, 20).

The command is given to the 'dresser of the vineyard,' who represents Christ. Hereupon our Lord appears as the Advocate with the Father, as King, on behalf of the sinner, to procure for him time for repentance. He intercedes for him, and hence is called *Intercessor, Mediator, Advocate*

* Καταργεω, to make worthless.

(1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1). He asks only a temporary respite after the sentence is passed, such as was granted to the old world (Gen. vi. 3), or to the Ninevites (Jonah iii. 4); so that the delay may be conducive to God's glory, either by the display of His mercy or by the vindication of His justice.

The promise of the dresser to exert all his skill, and to omit nothing that might contribute to the fruitfulness of the tree, points to an increase of the means of grace, which was fulfilled in Christ and the apostles going about 'preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom,' and entreating their hearers to consider the things which belonged to their peace (St. Luke xix. 41, 42; 2 Cor. v. 20; Phil. iii. 18). In the case of the *Jews* we know the result: all exhortations and remonstrances being unavailing, they fell under the awful judgment of God. The Roman army, under Titus, besieged and took Jerusalem, after inflicting the most dreadful sufferings, and utterly destroyed the city and the temple. Thus the following, among other prophecies, were fulfilled:—Ps. lxxx. 13; Is. i. 7; Dan. ix. 26; St. Luke xix. 41, &c.

The fate of the Jewish Church may properly suggest to us the similar danger to which we expose ourselves by a like abuse of our religious privileges. Although we believe that 'the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church' *in general* (St. Matt. xvi. 18), yet *particular branches* will flourish or fade, according to circumstances. Consider, for an example of this, the Seven Churches of Asia (Rev. ii. iii.). With reference to *individuals*, the warning that the same result will follow the abuse of privileges is given in St. Matt. iii. 10; St. John xv. 2.

The *long-suffering patience* of God, together with its limits and object, are pointed out without a parable in Rom. ii. 4, and 2 Pet. iii. 9. In the latter passage, observe who are the 'some men' spoken of, the nature of their argument, the apostle's *first* reply, his *second* (compare Ps. xc. 4). This latter argument of the apostle is well illustrated in the history of Redemption, which was first promised four thousand years before it was accomplished.

The *certainty* of the threatened punishment of the impenitent and unbelieving, though it be long delayed, is pointed out in Eccles. viii. 11–13.

QUESTIONS.

What gave rise to this parable? Who was Pontius Pilate? [Roman Governor of Judea at that time.] Why was the Governor of Judea sent from Rome? [Because Judea was a province subject to the Roman Empire.] What was Pilate's character? [Tyrannical and obstinate.] Who were the Galileans here mentioned? Why had they come up to Jerusalem? What promise of protection from foreign invasion had the Israelites in connection with this custom? [Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24.] What may have given occasion to this outrage by Pilate? Quote an example of this. What discord may this murder have occasioned? What feeling may have caused the mention of this circumstance on the present occasion? Illustrate this from Scripture. What other case of the destruction of human life does Jesus mention? What was His object in doing so? In both instances, what does our Saviour deny? What is the right use to be made of the misfortunes of others? What do they then become to us? What is intimated by the words 'above all,' &c.? What, however, did this not prove them to be? Why might the others be spared? Give examples from Scripture. What is the great cause of all suffering? What have we no right to infer from this? Give examples. In what light is the connection of sin and suffering in this life to be viewed? Is this view productive of any advantage? What is the design of this parable of 'The Barren Fig-tree'? How are the fig-tree and the vine metaphorically used in Scripture? Are they ever classed together? What expression is used to signify a state of prosperity and safety? Of what, in Scripture, is the destruction of these trees the token? What use did our Saviour, on one occasion, make of a fig-tree? Show that this must have been *emblematic*. Where had He been just before, and what was to be understood by His action? What is meant by the fruit sought? Illustrate this from the Old Testament. Prove, from Scripture, the necessity of personal holiness. In how many points was this fig-tree defective? What was the *first* point? What was the *second* point? What is the meaning of 'cumbered' the ground? What effect would this have on the other trees? What effect upon the Gentiles was produced by the conduct of the Jews? Did this in any way affect the Christians? What was necessary on this account? What command was given concerning this tree? What impression would this convey to the mind of a Jew? Why? To whom was the command given? Whom does he represent? In what character does He here appear? What names does He

bear in consequence? What extent of favour does He ask? What would this delay be conducive to? How? What did the dresser promise he would do? To what does this point? How does the *earnestness* of our Lord and His Apostles appear? What was the result of this respite on the part of the Jews? What people were the executioners of God's wrath? Under what commander? What prophecies then received their full completion? In what light may the history of the Jews be regarded? To whom, then, may the parable be referred? What lesson may we, as a *Church*, learn from it? How do you reconcile this with our Lord's own words in St. Matt. xvi. 18? Show that this parable may also refer to individuals. Prove the certainty of the threatened punishment, though long delayed. Show, from St. Paul's writings, the forbearance of God, with its limits and object. What does St. Peter say on the same subject? What does the word 'promise' mean in this passage? [A declaration of the dissolution of the present world at our Lord's second coming.] Who are the 'some men' here spoken of? What is the nature of their argument? What is the Apostle's first reply? How does he argue from one fact to the other? [See verse 7. The faithfulness of God.] What reply does he make as to the length of time that has elapsed? How does the Psalmist express the same truth? What is the meaning of this in the Apostle's argument? Give an example of a work executed long after it was first announced. [The work of redemption.]

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT.

St. Matt. xviii. 21-35.

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants,

which owed him an hundred pence and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

NOTES.



THE object of this parable is to make it clear that when God calls upon man to forgive, it is not that He asks him to renounce a *right*; but that, in fact, man has no right to exercise in the matter. How surprising are the many injunctions that we meet with in the Gospel concerning 'forgiveness of injuries.' It would almost seem that a revengeful disposition is one of the greatest snares to which our corrupt nature is exposed.

St. Peter, having heard (ver. 15) how to deal with an offending brother, asks the Saviour how often this forgive-

ness was to be exercised. He was under the impression that if he could bring himself to forgive 'seven' times, he would certainly fulfil the utmost requirements of the Law, and would then be at liberty to take his revenge. There may be an allusion in the number 'seven' to our Lord's precept in St. Luke xvii. 4; or, possibly, St. Peter here uses the common Hebrew phrase for 'very often,' as in Prov. xxiv. 16; or, his question may have arisen from the custom of the Jewish Doctors, who (Amos i. 3, &c.) held that three offences were to be forgiven, but not necessarily the fourth; or, uniting the two numbers, he may have supposed seven times the extreme limit of forgiveness. The question showed that St. Peter's disposition was still imperfect and defective, as it implied that, although he might forgive up to a certain point, he was yet at liberty to lay up injuries in his memory, and on some future occasion, when further provoked, wreak his full vengeance on the offender.

Our Lord's answer does not merely settle the question as to the number of times that a man *may* exercise forgiveness; but he asserts the *absolute necessity* of his doing so, and that *without measure*. By the almost unlimited number which He specifies (see a similar expression in the case of Lamech, Gen. iv. 24), He intimates that as often as the offender returns, acknowledging his fault and seeking a reconciliation, so often are we bound freely and fully to forgive his trespass. Only by acting in this manner can we show ourselves the genuine offspring of God, who is slow to wrath and ready to forgive, who is kind and merciful even to the unthankful and the evil (St. Matt. v. 44, 45, 48; St. Luke vi. 35; Acts xiv. 17). The connection between the duty here spoken of and our relation to God as *sons* may be seen in Eph. iv. 32, v. 1, 2; Col. iii. 13.

To illustrate this, our Saviour introduces into this parable two men of opposite characters: the one of a mild, forgiving disposition; the other, of a merciless, unrelenting temper—showing by the contrast the excellence of the former and the hatefulness of the latter.

The 'Kingdom of Heaven' is the Church of Christ, the redeemed world of which He is Lord and King, and in which His forgiveness is not measured by the number of

offences, seeing that His people are washed from *all* their sins in His precious blood (Rev. vii. 14). And so, in the parable, Christ is designated 'the King:' He is the Great King and Sovereign of the universe (Ps. ii. 6-8; St. Matt. xxviii. 18; Ps. cx. 2, 3), and all are accountable to Him as servants to a master (St. Matt. xvi. 27, 28; St. John v. 22, 27.)

'The King will take account of his servants.' The final account will be at the last day (St. Matt. xxv. 31; Acts xvii. 31, &c.); but even now Christ is ever judging, 'reckoning with his servants.' The great dispensations of Providence, the putting down one thing and setting up another, are instances of God's righteous judgment; they are all witnesses and signs of the final and complete judgment at the end. And so whenever God the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of the Word, or by any visitation or warning, reproves man's conscience, or stirs him up from a state of careless security, He is 'taking account' of that man. Thus David was taught by Nathan that God was reckoning with him (2 Sam. xii. 7), thus also Jonah summoned the Ninevites to repentance (Jonah iii. 4), and John the Baptist the Jews (St. Matt. iii. 2); and we, seeing that the Holy Spirit is ever in the Church (St. John xiv. 16; St. Matt. xxviii. 20), are continually called upon to consider our obligations as Christians. This is the meaning here.

'One was brought unto him,' &c. The value of a talent has been variously estimated. Calmet makes the talent of *gold* equal to 5,475*l.*, and that of *silver* equal to 342*l.* Reckoning the talents to have been of the latter metal, the amount would be nearly equal to three and a half millions of our present money; probably the revenue of a province which this unfaithful servant * had embezzled, and which there was no hope of his ever being able to pay. This debtor represents mankind in general, and sin is represented in Scripture as a debt which man incurs to God's justice (St. Matt. vi. 12); and, like this debtor, man has 'nothing to pay,' no means of deliverance, no hope of escape (Job ix. 2, 3; Ps. cxliii. 2; Rom. iii. 19, 20, &c.).

'His lord commanded him to be sold,' &c. Allusion is

* Though mention is made of a 'servant,' it is evident that the warning of the parable is derived from the conduct of one who belonged to the highest rank of society.

here made to a custom which in early ages prevailed in many countries: viz. that of selling the debtor and his family for the satisfaction of his creditors. That this custom existed among the Jews may be inferred from xxv. 39-41: see, also, 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 4, 5; Jer. xxxiv. 8-11. We are here taught the utter helplessness of man's condition, were God to proceed against him with strict and impartial justice. The heavy penalty of sin is, therefore, here indicated (see Is. i. 1).

'The servant therefore fell down,' &c. We are told by travellers that the Arabs even now use the same *form* of lowly submission and *deference* towards their superiors; kissing their feet, their knees, or their garments, when they have a favour to beg (see St. Matt. ii. 11, viii. 2, xv. 25, &c.). The servant, sensible of his master's right and power to execute the sentence in its utmost rigour, humbly solicits a respite, making many promises to discharge the debt if this indulgence be granted.

It was impossible that the promise thus given under the influence of terror could ever be performed, so great was the debt. The giving such a promise throws light upon the character of the man as it is developed immediately afterwards. It shows that he had not come to a proper recognition of the immensity of his debt: he thought he *owed* little, therefore he considered that he was *forgiven* little, and therefore he *loved* little (St. Luke vii. 47). And so we may make sure of this:—just in the same proportion that we feel the greatness of our own sin, and consequently the greatness of God's mercy in the forgiveness of it, in the same proportion we shall be prepared to forgive others the offences which they commit against us.

'Then the lord of that servant,' &c. The character of this noble and generous prince is here shown in the most amiable light. Although he has sustained great injury through this servant; although he knows his utter inability to pay; yet, moved with compassion, he not only grants what was asked, but freely forgives him all the debt—freely releases him from all the punishment. In like manner, as soon as a sinner turns to God with true repentance and unfeigned faith, so soon will He freely forgive him all that he owes, and discharge him at once from the guilt, the power,

and the wages of sin (Is. i. 18: see, also, Introductory Sentences to Morning and Evening Prayer).

We learn from the sequel, that contrition, or sorrow for the punishment of sin, is not in itself true repentance; for repentance implies a total change of mind and disposition, and is sure to manifest itself in our conduct towards those who in any way do us an injury.

'But the same servant,' &c. Contrast, now, the behaviour of this man, to whom so much had been forgiven, towards one like himself, a servant of the great king. *He* was indebted to his fellow-servant only in a small sum, little more than 3*l.*,* but was unable, at the moment, to discharge it. *He* seized him by the throat, so as almost to *strangle* him, for such is the full meaning of the word in the original (it is the same word which is translated 'choked' in St. Mark v. 14); and in an unrelenting and peremptory tone demanded instant payment. His fellow-servant fell down at his feet, as he himself had just done to his lord, and, in the very same words which he himself had just used, besought him to have patience. One would have imagined that the similarity of circumstances must have brought to remembrance his own late distress, and have produced the like generous compassion which he himself had experienced from his lord.

'And he would not,' &c. So hard-hearted and cruel is man to his fellow-man, unless he constantly bear about with him a sense of forgiveness received from God. He not only failed to forgive him, but he would not even have patience with him. Ignorance, or forgetfulness of the greatness of his own debt, makes him harsh and unforgiving to others. See 2 Sam. xii. 5, and compare with Gal. vi. 1 and Titus iii. 2, 3.

'So when his fellow-servants saw,' &c. Doubtless they joined their entreaties for patience to those of the debtor; but neither their compassion nor importunity had the least influence upon the hard-hearted creditor. As a last resource, therefore, they made known the whole case, with one consent, to their common master, knowing his

* This sets before us the disproportion between the trespasses committed against us by our fellow-man, and which *we* are called upon to forgive, and those which *Almighty God* hath frankly forgiven us, forasmuch as we had not to pay.

justice and humanity. Their expectations were not disappointed.

'Then his lord,' &c. He paints his cruelty and oppression in the strongest colours, reminding him of the different treatment which he had met with, even beyond his expectation; and, also, the greatness of his own debt as compared with that of the other; and then points out how strongly the remembrance should have inspired sentiments of compassion for his fellow-servant in circumstances so similar. He then revokes his former indulgence, and insists on the most rigorous exaction of the penalty. Observe, that the lord did not chide his servant for *owing* him ten thousand talents, but for his cruel treatment of his fellow-servant. The guilt laid to his charge is not that *needing* mercy, he refused to show it; but that, *having received infinite* mercy, he remains unmerciful. No answer from the unmerciful servant is recorded; he seems to have been 'speechless.' This will be the condition of sinners at the Day of Judgment. No excuse will then be of any avail.

'The tormentors,' &c. : *i. e.* the jailors, who, in Eastern countries, subject their prisoners to a very mean and scanty allowance of food, frequently load them with yokes of heavy wood, in which they can neither lie nor sit at ease; and, by frequent scourgings and tortures, bring them to an untimely end. To these this merciless servant was delivered, 'till * he should pay all' he owed; which, as he could never do, so he could never expect to leave that place of torment (St. James ii. 13).

'So likewise,' &c. : see, also, St. Matt. vi. 14, 15, vii. 2; St. Mark xi. 25, 26. See this duty of forgiveness exemplified in our Blessed Saviour (St. Luke xxiii. 34); also St. Stephen (Acts vii. 60).

Notice, also, from this parable, the great disparity between the injuries we receive from any of our fellowmen and those which we attempt to inflict upon God's character and government. For, although we cannot, in reality, injure God, yet we may act in such a way as to show a criminal disaffection to His rule and authority. The *impotency* of our assaults adds much to our *folly*, but takes nothing from our *guilt* (Job xv. 25, 26; Acts ix. 5).

* 'Till' does not indicate the time when punishment *will cease*; but the time up to which punishment *will continue*.

QUESTIONS.

What gave rise to this parable? What probably led St. Peter to ask the question? What do the words 'how often,' &c., betray on the part of St. Peter? What do the words 'till seven times'? Why may the number *seven* have occurred to him? What does the question show St. Peter's disposition to have been? Why? What do we learn from our Lord's answer? [That we should forgive, not exactly four hundred and ninety times, but *any number of times.*] Is the same definite number used anywhere else in Scripture for an indefinite number? By cherishing a forgiving spirit, whose children do we prove ourselves to be? How does our Saviour illustrate this precept? What contrast of character is here shown? What is meant by the 'Kingdom of Heaven'? Who is here represented as a 'king'? Prove from Scripture that Christ is thus properly designated. When will He *finally* reckon with His servants? Is this the reckoning meant in the parable? How does God take account of His servants here on earth? Give examples of this. How much did one of the servants owe? How much might this amount to? How was so large a debt probably incurred? Whom does the debtor represent? Is the term 'debt' ever applied in Scripture to sin? Prove that this debt can never be fully paid by man. What was ordered to be done with this debtor? What custom is here alluded to? Illustrate this from Scripture. What did the servant beg? What promise did he make? How did his lord act towards him? How did this conduct manifest great generosity? What does this part of the parable represent? What does the sequel teach with respect to 'repentance'? Whom did the servant afterwards meet? What was the amount of this debt? How did the servant act towards *his* debtor? What is the full meaning of 'took him by the throat'? What did he manifest by the manner of his demand? How did his fellow-servant act? How ought this action to have affected this particular creditor, and why? What, on the contrary, was his conduct? What does this part of the parable represent? What feelings will a constant sense of God's mercy to ourselves cause us to have towards others? What will the absence of this sense make us? How did his fellow-servants probably act during this scene? What was their last resource? What did their lord do? Of what did he remind the merciless creditor? What conduct did he say ought to have been the consequence? What did he then do? Who were the tormenters? Why were they so called? How long was this misery to continue? What did this amount to? What moral does our Saviour annex to the

parable? Illustrate the same truth from other passages. In what words does the Lord's Prayer teach the same truth? What is remarkable about this petition? Quote passages proving the danger of a relapse into sin. What is the great duty, then, which we learn from this parable? Is this impossible to be done? Show that, though difficult, it is not impossible. Who in this, as in all other matters, is our perfect example? What do we learn from this parable as to the *nature* and *extent* of our forgiveness? What may we learn from the disparity between the two debts? Can we really injure God by our sins? What, however, do we show by them? Prove that the weakness of our assaults will not take away our guilt. Prove that they will not screen us from punishment.

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

St. Matt. xx. 1-16.

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them ; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle ?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard ; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give

them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that *were* hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more ; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong : didst not thou agree with me for a penny ?

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way : I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last : for many be called, but few chosen.

NOTES.

IN the preceding chapter there is an account of an interview between our Saviour and a rich young man, whose attachment to the world prevented his becoming one of His disciples. St. Peter, who was aware of the circumstance, reminded the Saviour that he and his fellow-apostles had acted in a very different manner, 'had forsaken *all* and followed Him,' and asked what reward they should in consequence receive. In answer, Jesus declared that at the general resurrection, when He Himself should be seated on His throne of glory, they should share that honour with Him. And He further declared, that not merely the apostles, but all who in any

age, for His sake and the Gospel's, gave up any worldly advantages or possessions, should receive such blessings in the present life as would more than compensate for their losses, and in the world to come should inherit eternal life. To show, however, that these rewards are of *grace*, and not of debt; that they proceed from the bounty of God, and are not the result of man's deserving; He relates the present parable, which is both preceded and followed by the words, 'Many that are first shall be last,' &c. This statement is also found in St. Luke (xiii. 30), where it follows a prediction concerning the exclusion of the Jews from the kingdom of God, and the admission of the Gentiles. In this parable there is a prophetic allusion to the same event.

By the 'Kingdom of Heaven' is meant the kingdom of grace here upon earth: *i. e.* the Church *Militant*, not the future and glorious state of the Church *Triumphant*.

The 'Householder' represents God, the Great Master of His family throughout the universe. The 'vineyard' is His Church, which in Holy Scripture is frequently represented under this figure (Ps. lxxx. 8; Is. v. 1, xxvii. 2; Jer. ii. 21; St. Matt. xxi. 33). The Church was at first confined to the Jewish nation, who were the labourers that were first called to labour for its improvement.

By the successive 'hirings' may be understood the successive revelations made to mankind. Some persons have supposed the time of Adam the *First* hour; the time of Abraham the *Third* hour; the time of Moses the *Sixth* hour; the time of the Prophets the *Ninth* hour; and the time of Christ the *Eleventh*, or last, as the days of the Gospel are called (see Acts ii. 17; Heb. i. 2). Others suppose the *First* hour to refer to Christ's personal ministry among the Jews; the *Third*, to His sending His apostles to preach in the cities and villages of Palestine (St. Matt. x. 5); the *Sixth* and *Ninth*, to the preaching of the apostles after the day of Pentecost, first to the Jews in Judea, afterwards to the Jews in the dispersion and the Samaritans (Acts viii. 4, 5, xi. 19); and the *Eleventh* hour, to the Gospel being preached to the Gentiles, who had not been hired before.

It should be observed, that no person of his own accord came to the householder desiring employment from him (St. John xv. 16); they are all 'called.' In like manner,

no one of himself seeks to be received into God's favour (St. John vi. 44); but He, desirous of our salvation, seeks us, and is found of them that sought Him not (Is. lxxv. 1, quoted in Rom. x. 20; St. Luke xix. 10; 1 John iv. 10). See also the parables of 'The Lost Sheep,' and 'The Lost Piece of Money' (St. Luke xv.). Being a 'call,' however, it is quite in the power of any one to disregard it; no person is *forced* into the vineyard (Deut. xxx. 19; Prov. i. 24; Is. lxxv. 2; Acts vii. 51).

A 'penny' was worth about eightpence of our money. The Roman denarius, or Greek drachma, was probably the usual day's wages. Tacitus says of the Roman soldiers that 'their souls and bodies were estimated at ten asses per day, the *as* being the tenth part of a denarius.' See also Tobit v. 14. This was the agreement made with those first hired; but it is to be observed, that only a reasonable payment was promised to the others, which laid the foundation for that complaint of injustice and partiality which was afterwards set up.

We are not to understand by the 'penny' the reward of eternal life, for the parable has no reference to the glorious state of the Church; but to the present imperfect one, in which the blessings and privileges of the Gospel are offered to all, without distinction (Acts ii. 17, 18). In the *final* rewards there will be different degrees of glory, answering to the different degrees of holiness, as we are taught in the parable of 'The Pounds' (St. Luke xix). There will also be no murmuring nor discontent then (Rev. xv. 3).

When hired, these men were expected to labour: *i. e.* to be active and industrious in the Christian life, to crucify the flesh (Gal. v. 24), and to walk in the Spirit (Rom. viii. 1). This labour, in order to be acceptable to God, must be in the vineyard: *i. e.* they must be engrafted into Christ's Church, renewed by the Spirit, and grow in grace (Col. ii. 6: see also Thirteenth Article of Religion).

There is no encouragement given in this parable to *delay* repentance. It is true that the *last* hired received equal wages with the first; but it must be remembered that they were not *hired* until the eleventh hour, and, therefore, could not work in the vineyard before, and that they *did work* during the whole time for which they were hired. All this does not apply to those who were dedicated to God's service

in Baptism, and who have ever since actually professed the faith of the Gospel. God may pardon at the last hour of life, as in the case of the penitent thief (St. Luke xxiii. 43); but this case is no encouragement to the careless—to those who put off repentance. The penitent thief had probably never been called before. At all events, the comment of an old divine is most admirable:—‘There is *one* case of *death-bed* repentance, that none might despair; there is *only* one, that none might *presume*.’ This is the utmost that can be said of it. If any are saved in this way, they do not resemble those labourers who were hired at the eleventh hour, but that son who at first refused to work in his father’s vineyard, and who afterwards repented and went (St. Matt. xxi. 28).

‘So when *even* was come,’ &c. By the term ‘even’ we are not to understand the end of the world, or the end of man’s life, but only to take it as a general expression, which is used to introduce the chief point of the parable, viz. the dispensing of the reward; which also agrees with the usual practice of the Jews, who were commanded in the Law to pay their hired servants *daily* (Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15); and the neglect of this is represented in Scripture as calling for vengeance (Mal. iii. 5; St. James v. 4).

The *last* hired received as much as those hired first. By this is meant that the Gentiles, under the new dispensation, should receive every advantage which would have been theirs had they been the descendants of Abraham, God’s first chosen people.

By the murmuring of those first called, is meant the dissatisfaction of the Jews at the admission of the Gentiles into the Church, a spirit which we find to have been very prevalent (see Acts xi. 1, xiii. 46, xxii. 21, 22; and generally the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians). The elder brother in the parable of ‘The Prodigal Son’ exactly corresponds with these discontented labourers; and there the father condescends to reason with him, as the householder does here with the labourers.

He tells them, *first*, that they cannot complain of any injustice, seeing they have received their full wages; what they had themselves agreed to.* God, in like manner, had

* A strong rebuke of the selfishness of the Jews is implied in the original

faithfully fulfilled His promise to Abraham in favour of his posterity; and if He now thought proper to extend His mercies to the Gentiles, no injustice was thereby done to the Jewish nation. He tells them, in the *second* place, that He has given to the rest only what was strictly His own property, and therefore at His own disposal, and that their complaints are an insult to His sovereignty. The same answer is applicable to those who cavil at the disposals of God's providence. He tells them, in the *third* place, that the cause of their murmurs is an evil eye: *i. e.* an envious, selfish, and covetous mind (see Deut. xv. 9; 1 Sam. xviii. 9; Prov. xxiii. 6). The expression, therefore, 'Is thine eye evil because I am good?' may be explained:—'As long as you have what is just, why should you complain? Are you envious because I choose to be liberal and kind?'

Our Saviour concludes with the same general aphorism which He had prefixed to the parable, viz. 'Many that are last shall be first,' &c., to show that the Jews, who were *first* in point of privileges, should, in consequence of the way in which they had abused them, and of their obstinate rejection of the Messiah, become *last* in point of success; while the Gentiles, the *last* called into the Church, should, in consequence of their readiness to comply with God's will, take the place of the others, and become *first* in point of privileges. This prediction of the Saviour is amply confirmed by reference to the Acts of the Apostles, viii. 8, 37, x. 33, xi. 17, xiii. 42, 48, xv. 31, &c.

He adds, 'Many are called, but few chosen.' These words are also found in St. Matt. xxii. 14. In both places they imply the rejection of the majority of the Jews—the murmurers in the present parable—few of whom could be prevailed upon to believe in Christ, and so, by confessing Him as the Messiah, become the elect or chosen of God. This interpretation of a passage which is unquestionably difficult is strongly confirmed by St. Paul throughout the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Notice particularly the fifth verse, 'a *remnant* according to the *election*

word which is translated 'friend' (*ἑταῖρος*). It always implies, as indeed our modern address 'Friend' does, something of anger or of distant treatment. Compare the following passages in which the same Greek word is used:—St. Matt. xxii. 12, xxvi. 50.

* The original word, translated 'good' (*ἀγαθός*), means not merely 'just,' but 'benevolent.'

of grace: 'viz., the believing Jews scattered throughout the world. These are also termed by St. Peter 'elect,' or 'chosen' (1 Pet. i. 2, ii. 9).

QUESTIONS.

Out of what circumstance did this parable arise? Relate the interview of the young man with our Saviour. How did St. Peter say he and his fellow-apostles had acted? What did he ask? What rewards did Christ say the Apostles should have? Who else, besides them, should be rewarded? How? Were these to be rewards of *merit*? Of what, then? How does our Saviour teach this? What saying precedes this parable? Where else is that saying found? In what connection does St. Luke use it? Is there any allusion to the same event here? Why were the Jews to be excluded from God's kingdom? Why were the Gentiles to be admitted? Quote passages from Scripture expressing their eager desire for this. What is meant by the 'kingdom of heaven'? Is the Church Triumphant included here? Who is meant by the 'householder'? What is meant by the 'vineyard'? To whom was this at first confined? In what other parable does our Saviour use the same figure? Explain the successive hirings. How did the Jews divide the day? What would be the corresponding hours with us? If the eleventh hour *mean* the Christian dispensation, show from other passages that it will be the last. If all the callings into the vineyard refer to the Christian dispensation, explain what is meant by the *first* hour; what by the *third* hour; what by the *sixth* and *ninth* hours; and what by the *eleventh* hour. What may we learn from the fact that no one came of his own accord to be hired? Illustrate this from other passages. By what other parables does our Saviour teach the same truth? What is implied in its being a 'call'? Prove that man is treated as a free agent. What agreement was made with regard to wages? What, in our money, is the value of the penny here spoken of? Was this a usual day's pay? With whom was this agreement made? What agreement was made with the others? What is *not* to be understood by the penny? Why? What is to be understood? By what parable does our Saviour teach that the *final* rewards will vary? According to what will they vary? Prove that there will be no murmuring there. What were the labourers, when hired, expected to do? What does this teach us? Where was the work to be done? What does this teach? What does the Thirteenth Article of Religion say on this point? What wrong

use is sometimes made of this parable? Show that it gives no countenance to this. What answer did the labourers hired at the eleventh hour make to the question put to them? Show that this is inapplicable to us. May God show mercy at the last hour of life? What example is there of this? Has He, however, given any encouragement to supineness by this? What is the utmost that can be said of the above case? If any are saved in that way, whom do they rather resemble? In what sense are we to understand the words 'when *even* was come'? Was it agreeable with the practice of the Jews to pay at the close of each day? Quote passages to show that this was commanded. Prove, from Scripture, that God takes especial notice of the sin of withholding wages. What is meant by the 'last hired' receiving the same amount of pay with those first hired? To what does the murmuring of the first refer? How was the candour of the householder shown? What is meant by the 'burden' and 'heat of the day'? In what other parable is there a resemblance to those murmuring labourers? Is there any other resemblance between the two parables? What is the *first* answer the householder makes to the murmuring? How had this been verified in the case of the Jews? What is the *second* answer he makes? To whom may the same answer still be made? In whom was this sovereignty exemplified? What is the *third* answer which he makes? What is meant by an 'evil eye'? What does the word 'good' signify here? Quote a passage in which the word is contrasted with 'righteous.' [Rom. v. 7.] How does our Saviour conclude the parable? To what does this refer? How had these been respectively *first* and *last*? How was this to be reversed? Where else do we find the concluding words used? What do they signify in both cases? How does St. Paul confirm this view? What does St. Peter call those to whom he wrote? In a secondary sense, how may the parable be applied as between the Apostles and the Christians of succeeding ages? How may it be applied in the case of individual Christians? Exemplify this in the case of St. Paul. What is the reason he gives for this? How may the parable be applied to the case of Christians who die young? [That, whether our time of probation be long or short,—since the issues of life and death are in God's hands,—He only expects that work to be done for which He gives us opportunities, and He will reward us accordingly.]

THE TWO SONS SENT INTO THE VINEYARD.

St. Matt. xxi. 28-32.

28 A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto

him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

NOTES.



HIS parable arose out of the occurrences of the preceding day. Our Saviour, whose earthly ministry was now drawing to a close, had openly entered Jerusalem as the King Messiah, and proceeded to the temple. There, by expelling the traders, He had asserted His right over it and over the conduct of those who frequented it (vers. 12, 13). Feeling that this was beyond the province of a private individual, the chief priests and scribes—who composed the council of the Sanhedrim, and whose office it was to distinguish between true and false prophets—demanded by what authority He acted. As this demand arose from irritation, our Saviour, instead of giving a reply,—which would probably have led to His immediate apprehension—becomes in His turn the questioner, and engages to tell them, if they will first answer Him this question, ‘Was the baptism of John a divine or human institution?’ in other words, was John a *true* or a *false* prophet?

That John was a true prophet they could not admit without acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, for John had announced him as such (St. Matt. iii.; St. John i.); and, if they admitted as much as this, the Saviour’s right to act as He had done was unquestionable. On the other hand

prudential motives hindered them from *denying* John's claims, for the people who owned him for a prophet would in such a case have indignantly stoned them. They chose, therefore, rather to pretend ignorance than to confess a truth which they plainly saw would condemn themselves; and thus they allowed that they were incompetent to judge in this more important and solemn matter.

Jesus, perceiving that a plain question was evaded through perverseness, proceeds to condemn them out of their own mouths by a series of parables, in which, as in a mirror, they might see themselves, their neglect and contempt of privileges, and the aggravated guilt of that outrage against Himself which they were already meditating in their hearts.

The father of the two sons in the parable, as also in St. Luke xv. 11, represents God as the Creator of all men, and the special friend of the Jewish nation. The *first* of the two sons represents the profligate and openly wicked portion of the nation, which boldly threw off the yoke, and openly transgressed God's laws; such were the 'publicans and harlots.' By the *second* son we are to understand that portion of the nation which had been kept by the restraints of the Law, which they professed to love and venerate, from open and notorious sin; such were the Scribes and Pharisees.

By the father's command to the son to work in the vineyard, we are to understand the demands of the Mosaic law on the Jewish nation; calling upon them to produce the fruits of a holy and religious life. This call the publicans and harlots, and all other open sinners, disregarded; for that it was in the power of everyone to refuse this call we saw in the parable of 'The Labourers' (see Deut. xxx. 19; Prov. i. 24; Is. lxx. 2; Acts vii. 51). In the case of Christians, this may be considered as the call of the Gospel.

The first son undutifully refused to obey; but afterwards, upon reflection, he repented, and, by going into the vineyard, endeavoured to make up for his former disobedience as far as lay in his power. This intimated that the profligate part of the nation would be brought to repentance and amendment of life; which was verified in the case of many, when John came preaching the baptism of repentance (St.

Luke iii. 10-14). When Christ went among these outcasts He always found them more ready to believe than the Scribes and Pharisees (St. Luke xv. 1, 2; St. John vii. 45-49).

The second son's answer is descriptive of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees; who addressed God by the most honourable titles, and professed the greatest readiness and zeal in His service, while their whole lives were marked by disobedience and rebellion. See their characters depicted by Christ Himself, St. Matt. xxiii. 2, xv. 8. In this part of the parable it is intimated that those who had the *form* of godliness, without the *reality*, would reject the Gospel, and then their specious professions would avail nothing.

By asking their opinion, Christ makes them condemn themselves; but it seems they were not aware of this till He made a direct application, by telling them that the publicans and harlots, *i.e.* professed and open sinners, would accept the Gospel before themselves, self-righteous and hypocritical as they undoubtedly were (compare St. Matt. xi. 25; St. Luke xviii. 14).

The words 'they go *before* you' do not mean that they themselves would follow after; 'but they go *rather* than you.' At the same time they intimate that the door of the kingdom was still open for them as well as for the others; that the others had, indeed, preceded them, showing them the way, *viz.* repentance; yet they might still follow if they would.

'For John came unto you,' &c.: *i. e.* he came as they believed a prophet should come; fulfilling their own idea of 'the way of righteousness,' which consisted in a strong and marked separation of himself from his fellowmen, living in a retired and abstemious manner; yet they rejected him (St. Luke vii. 33), not only at first, but even when they had seen the effect of his preaching upon the publicans, whom they despised. In the same way they would reject our Saviour Himself, although condescending to live as one of themselves.

The parable does not, *primarily*, refer to the Gentile world; yet that application of it may also be included, since the Gentiles stood in the same relation to the Jews that the notorious transgressors of the Jewish nation did to the

more righteous portion, the Scribes and Pharisees. The full meaning of the parable, therefore, is, that the Jews, who called themselves the children of God, and especially the Pharisees, who affected so much more religion than the rest of the nation, were more alien from the kingdom of God than the publicans and harlots whom they despised; or than the whole Gentile world, who were, by the Jews, held in the same estimation, and as such doomed to certain destruction (see St. Matt. viii. 10, 11; St. Mark vii. 29; Rom. x. 20, 21).

QUESTIONS.

Out of what proceedings did this parable arise? In what manner did our Saviour enter Jerusalem? What did He do in the temple? What claim did He thereby assert? Why did our Saviour act so openly now? What did the chief priests and Scribes demand? What council did these compose? Had they a right to demand Christ's authority? Why? From what feeling did they make the demand? If our Saviour had given a direct answer, what would have been the consequence? How did He answer? In what condition did this question put them? If they had acknowledged John's baptism, what would this have amounted to? Why? What answer would their question, then, receive? If they had denied John's baptism to be from God, what would have been the result? How did they answer the Saviour's question? What determination does this show on their part? How did they show by their answer that they were incapable of judging? How did our Saviour now proceed to condemn them? How many parables did He now put forth for that purpose? In the first parable, who is meant by the 'father'? Is God in any other parable represented in the same character? What kind of people does the 'first' son represent? Who among the Jews bore this character? What kind of people does the 'second' son represent? Who among the Jews bore this character? What command did the father give to both sons? What is meant by this command? How had the first-mentioned class acted? Show that it is in the power of any one to disregard the call. What may this call represent to us? How did the first son afterwards act? What did this intimate? Show that this happened in the case of many through John's preaching. Quote any similar cases in the history of our Lord. What kind of answer did the second son give? What was his conduct? Of what was this a lively

picture? What was their character as drawn by the Saviour? What does Christ here intimate they would do? What was our Saviour's object in asking their opinion of these two sons? Were they aware of this? What did He then tell them? What is the meaning of 'go before you'? Do these words intimate anything else? In what manner had John the Baptist come to them? What is meant by 'the way of righteousness'? In what, according to the Pharisees, did this consist? Was John then received by them as a prophet? What did they say of him? In what manner had our Saviour come to them? Were they satisfied with Him? To whom, in a secondary sense, may this parable be referred? Why? What, in such a case, is the general meaning of the parable? Illustrate this by any passages of Scripture.

THE VINEYARD LET OUT TO HUSBANDMEN.

St. Matt. xxi. 33-44.

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

St. Mark xii. 1-12; St. Luke xx. 9-18.

NOTES.

IN the preceding parable of 'The Two Sons,' a *retrospective* view is taken of the disobedience of the Jews as a nation, and especially of the heads of the nation—the Scribes and Pharisees. The present parable is both *retrospective* and *prospective*. It looks forward to the deeper guilt into which they should yet fall, till, the measure of their iniquities being full, they should be ripe for punishment. It is particularly addressed to the rulers, to whose corrupt administration and example our Saviour traces the degeneracy and corruption of the people.

The comparison of the Church to a vine, or to a vineyard, is, as we saw in the parable of 'The Labourers,' of frequent

occurrence in Holy Scripture (see Ps. lxxx.; Jer. ii. 21; Hos. x. 1). This particular parable, however, is evidently suggested by Is. v. 1, &c., with which our Lord's hearers could not fail to be well acquainted; as, also, with the interpretation which is there annexed. The chief difference appears to be that, in Isaiah's parable, the fault is laid on the *vine*; whereas, in our Saviour's, it is laid on the *husbandmen*, *i.e.* the chief rulers of the nation.

No comparison could be more natural, none more familiar, since Judea abounded in vineyards; indeed in the time of the Maccabees, the vine was stamped on their coins, as an emblem of the country. Hence, our Saviour compares Himself also to a vine (St. John xv.; compare Gen. xlix. 10).

The Householder, God the Father, himself *planted* this vineyard (see Exod. xv. 17), when, under Moses and Joshua, He brought His people out of Egypt and settled them in Canaan.

By the 'hedging round about' we may either understand the Divine protection, which was as 'a wall of fire' around the Jewish Church and people, to defend them from all their enemies (see Zech. ii. 5; Ps. cxxv. 2; and compare Job i. 10); or, it may be taken to mean all those peculiar laws and ordinances which were intended to keep them *separate* from the idolatrous nations around (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; Eph. ii. 14; and compare Num. xxiii. 9).

The 'wine-press,' which was necessary to every complete vineyard, consisted of two parts or vessels, one above the other. The grapes were thrown into the upper vessel and trodden by men (Judg. ix. 27; Neh. xiii. 15; Is. lxiii. 3); and the juice thus pressed out ran through a grated hole into the lower vessel, called the 'wine vat.' This wine vat was usually dug under ground, or in the side of a rock, for the sake of coolness (see St. Mark's version of the parable). 'A tower' was usually added, in which the keepers of the vineyard might watch against the incursions of wild animals or robbers (Song of Sol. i. 6, ii. 15).

By the wine-press and tower are meant all those channels which God provided for His people, by the due use of which they might have obtained the blessings of His favour. Thus, also, in the Christian Church, He has established Divine means of grace: such as His Word,

the Sacraments, and Prayer; whereby we may be enabled to bring forth fruit, and be defended against our spiritual enemies.

Thus furnished, the vineyard was let out to husbandmen, viz. the priests and elders, who had, in the most solemn manner, been set apart to instruct God's people, the Jewish nation (Lev. x. 11; Deut. xxxiii. 10; Mal. ii. 6, 7).

By the lord of the vineyard 'going into a far country' is meant, that the Jews were not to expect such extraordinary marks of God's *constant presence* and immediate direction as had been manifested to them in the wilderness and at Sinai. God may be said, afterwards, to have withdrawn for a time, waiting in patience to see the results of the teaching of their spiritual guides, at whose hands He justly demanded the fruits of His vineyard: viz. such returns of duty and obedience from the people committed to their care, as were commensurate with the advantages for religious improvement which had been conferred upon them (see Is. v. 7).*

The 'servants,' who were sent to demand the fruit, were the prophets, whom God successively raised up to point out to the whole nation, but especially to the rulers, the prevailing corruptions; and to recall them to their duty, by denunciations of God's wrath, in case they despised these admonitions. The prophets, one and all, are in the habit of speaking of themselves as *bringing a message* from God.

The treatment of these servants by the husbandmen is amply confirmed, both by Scripture and Jewish tradition. Jeremiah is said to have been stoned by the exiles in Egypt, and Isaiah sawn asunder by King Manasseh (see 2 Chron. xxiv. 19-21, xxxvi. 14-16; Neh. ix. 26; Acts vii. 52; 1 Thess. ii. 15; Heb. xi. 36-38).

The measure of their iniquity, however, was not yet full. The Householder having one Son—His only begotten (St. John iii. 16); His well-beloved (St. Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5)—when the fulness of time was come, sent Him

* The vineyard was only *let* to these husbandmen, on condition of the householder receiving as rent a fixed share of the produce, the remainder being for their own sustenance and support (see Song of Solomon, viii. 11, 12).

also (Gal. iv. 4) : that is, not merely at the precise time marked out by prophecy, but at the fittest season for fulfilling the great purposes of His manifestation. When the parable announces this Son as the last of God's messengers, it is plainly implied that He is superior in dignity and authority to all who ever went before Him in that character: see Heb. i. 1-3, iii. 3-6; Col. ii. 9, 10. He is here called 'heir,' not as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man; for the word 'heir' implies one who shall *succeed* to an inheritance. Christ was from all eternity Lord of the world, but He became 'heir of all things' by *redeeming* it from the power of sin—it then became His 'purchased possession.' He was 'made perfect through suffering' (Heb. v. 8, 9). And this is implied in the glorious vision of St. John, who, speaking of the name which He took, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' says that His vesture was 'dipped in blood' (Rev. xix. 13-16).

When the husbandmen said, 'This is the heir,' we are not to understand that the rulers knew Christ to be the Messiah, any more than that God did not know what they would do to His Son, when it is said, 'They will reverence My Son.' They might have known Him to be the Messiah by His mighty works, by consulting their own Scriptures, and ascertaining how ancient prophecies met their literal fulfilment in Him. Nevertheless they did not know Him; and this fact is urged by St. Peter, not as an excuse for their criminality, but with a view to excite them, by hopes of mercy, to repentance (Acts iii. 17).

The object which the wicked husbandmen had in view in this their conspiracy is stated in the words, 'Let us seize on his inheritance' (compare St. Mark xii. 7). This sentence explains exactly the nature of the Jewish sin, their hatred of our Lord's teaching, and their final rejection of Him. They wished to take the inheritance which God had given them into their own hands, to use it for their *own* purposes, not for His. They gloried in God's promise to Abraham so far as it exalted them; but the final purpose of that promise, viz., 'to bless all the families of the earth,' they rejected. They would have God to bless *their* nation and curse *other* nations. And thus it was that our Lord denounced their hypocrisy

in religious matters. They turned the ordinances which God had given them into food for pride; their pretended reverence for the Scriptures and for the Sabbath were indications only of their exclusiveness and self-worship. Always afterwards their opposition to the Gospel reached its height when the vocation of the Gentiles was spoken of—they would not suffer but that 'the inheritance should be theirs' (Acts xiii. 45, xxi. 28, xxii. 21, 22). It was because our Lord showed them that God's purpose towards them was a more divine and more glorious one than the increase of their temporal greatness—namely, their 'bringing forth fruits of righteousness' and holiness—that they put Him to death. As the parable symbolically foretells, 'they cast Him out' to the Romans, who crucified Him without the walls of the city (St. John xix. 17; Heb. xiii. 12, 13; and compare 1 Kings xxi. 13).

This continuance and increase of guilt from generation to generation is compared to the gradual filling up of a cup to the very brim, until it runs over (St. Matt. xxiii. 32).

Our Saviour, having stated the case before the chief priests and rulers, to whom the parable was addressed, referred the decision to be pronounced by their own consciences; as Isaiah had done in his parable. Not, perhaps, as yet aware of our Saviour's design, they gave a just decision; acknowledging that these wicked husbandmen should deservedly suffer destruction. Jesus now disclosed to them that they themselves were the men, and that they had condemned themselves by their own answer.

He showed them, by quoting Ps. cxviii. 22, 23, that the very thing which they had condemned in the case of the husbandmen had been predicted concerning themselves. In this passage the Church of God is compared to a building, of which the builders are the rulers of the Jewish nation, who rejected the Messiah, the real Corner Stone, on account of what they esteemed a want of comeliness or beauty (Is. liii. 2, 3: see the application of this passage to Christ, in Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7; Eph. ii. 20). Christ is so called as uniting the Jewish and the Christian Church into one spiritual building. The scope of the passage is that, in spite of the rejection of Christ by the Jewish rulers, He would nevertheless become the Head of the Church.

‘The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,’ &c. This is one of the clearest predictions to be found in Scripture of the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles. It was terribly fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Roman armies under Titus. Even Josephus attributes that destruction to the wickedness of the people; observing that ‘he verily believes fire and brimstone would have descended from heaven and consumed them, had not God thus destroyed them by the Romans.’ He mentions, in particular, the murder of James the Just as being reckoned by many a prime cause of their miseries (see also Acts xxviii. 27, 28).

Having compared Himself to a stone, our Lord proceeds to state the consequences of coming in contact with it. He that stumbles at this stone (Is. viii. 14, 15; St. Luke ii. 34), *i.e.*, is induced by his prejudices at Christ’s low condition to disbelieve His Gospel, shall, by so doing, suffer some loss; and, eventually, on his continued obstinacy, that stone will fall upon him and grind him to powder—*i.e.*, the Messiah Himself, after His exaltation to glory, shall utterly destroy all His impenitent and inveterate enemies. The ‘stumbling on the stone,’ and ‘being broken,’ refer to the punishment which the Jews were already beginning to suffer; but, if they learnt no lesson from this punishment—if they still, as it were, resisted the ‘corner-stone’—it would in the final judgment grind them to powder.

All three of the Evangelists by whom this parable is recorded notice the exasperation of the chief priests on perceiving our Lord’s design, and intimate that they would have at once gratified their malice by ‘laying hands on Him,’ had they not ‘feared the people.’

QUESTIONS.

In what does this parable differ from that of ‘The Two Sons’? Wherein does it differ from that of ‘The Labourers in the Vineyard’? To whom was this parable especially addressed? Why? To what is the Church here compared? Show that this comparison is of frequent occurrence in Scripture. Whence is this parable derived? What is the chief difference between Isaiah’s parable and this? Why was the comparison here used a natural one to the Jews? How was this shown? Does our Saviour

ever use the same comparison with respect to Himself? Who is meant by the 'Householder'? When did He plant His vineyard? What may be intended by 'hedging it round about'? Illustrate this from Scripture. What other meaning may the words bear? Illustrate this meaning from Scripture. Is a similar expression ever used of the Christian Church? Describe the 'wine-press' as used in Judea. What does St. Mark mean by the 'wine-fat,' and how was it frequently constructed? What was usually erected in the vineyard? For what purpose? What are the wine-press and tower intended to represent? To whom was the vineyard now let out? What is meant by the householder 'going into a far country'? What are meant by 'the fruits' which the householder expected? Who were 'the servants' that were sent to demand this fruit? On what condition was the vineyard held by these husbandmen? What treatment did the servants receive? Illustrate this from Scripture. Give examples of it from Jewish tradition. Who was next sent to them? Whom does this represent? Prove that Christ is the 'only begotten.' Prove that He is the 'well-beloved Son.' When was He sent forth? What is implied in His being 'the last' of God's messengers? In what sense is Christ 'the heir'? Did the rulers know our Saviour to be the Messiah? How might they have known it? Prove, however, that they did not. What use does St. Peter make of this fact? What may we not infer from the words 'they will reverence my Son'? What treatment did the son in this parable receive from the husbandmen? What was their professed object in thus acting? Show from Jewish history that the parable is a correct representation of them. How was this exemplified in Christ's case? To what do the words 'cast him out' refer? To what does our Saviour compare this increase of guilt from generation to generation? Having related the parable, what question did Christ put to the rulers? What was their answer? Why was it so correct? To what was this answer equivalent? How does our Saviour show them that all this had been predicted of themselves? [Ps. cxviii. 22, 23.] To what, in this passage, is the Church of God compared? Who are meant by the builders? Are these words ever applied to Christ by any other person? Why is Christ called the 'corner-stone'? What is the scope of the passage quoted by our Saviour? What prediction is contained in the words, 'the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you'? How was it fulfilled? To what does Josephus attribute the calamities of the Jewish nation? What particular instance of wickedness does he adduce in support of his opinion? Having compared Himself to a 'stone,' what consequences does Christ say would result from coming in con-

tact with it? What is His meaning? What was the cause of this stumbling? Had it been predicted? In the event of continued obstinacy, what will be the result? What is the meaning of this? What feelings did this parable excite in the breasts of the rulers? How were they restrained from gratifying their malice? How many of the Evangelists notice this fact?

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

St. Matt. xxii. 1-14.

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

NOTES.



IN the parable of 'The Vineyard let out to Husbandmen,' our Saviour had set forth the relation of the Jews to God as a matter of *duty*, and the danger which they incurred by neglecting the charge thus laid upon them. In the present parable, He describes that relation as a matter of *privilege* or grace conferred upon them, the contempt of which would incur an equal danger.

The 'Kingdom of Heaven' here spoken of is the Gospel Kingdom in its two aspects: first, *militant* here on earth; second, *triumphant* in Heaven.

By the 'King' is meant God the Father, who 'made a marriage for His Son,' when He gave Him to take our nature upon Him, 'taking the manhood into God' (Athenasian Creed).

In the New Testament our Saviour is constantly described as the Bridegroom or Spouse of the Church: a name and title which He appropriates to Himself in several passages of the Gospels (St. Matt. ix. 15, xxv. 1); and by which St. John the Baptist, St. Paul, and St. John the Divine, expressly designate Him (St. John iii. 29; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xix. 7).

Again, the Church, both of the old and new dispensation, is often represented under the figure of a wife or a bride espoused to a husband: viz., to God, or Christ (Is. liv. 1, &c.; Jer. xxxi. 32; Hos. ii. 19; Eph. v. 23, &c.; Rev. xxi. 2, 9, 10: see, also, Exhortation in the Marriage Service).

The word in the original, here translated 'marriage,' is in the plural, and means 'the wedding feasts,' because in the East it was the custom to celebrate a marriage by feasts during many successive days (Judg. xiv. 12; Tobit viii. 19).

Under this figure of a feast is to be understood the rich spiritual blessings of the new covenant, and the honours and happiness in reserve for Christ's faithful subjects (Is. xxv. 6; Song of Sol. v. 1; St. Luke xiv. 15: compare Prov. ix. 1, &c.).

By the servants who were *first* sent to call the invited guests to the marriage, are meant all the notices given by the Law and the Prophets to the Jews, the object of which was to prepare them for the reception of Christ and His doctrine.

The *second** bidding, when 'all things were ready,' seems to represent what Christ Himself did, and taught, and suffered, for their conversion and salvation; as well as all the testimonies and exhortations of the apostles and other preachers of the Gospel for the same purpose (St. Matt.

* It was customary among the people of the East to send a second invitation to the guests, at the time of the banquet itself (see Esther v. 8, vi. 14).

iii. 2, iv. 17, x. 7; Acts ii. 38, 39, iii. 19, 26: compare Gal. iv. 4).

The treatment of the servants in the parable exactly corresponds with that which Christ and His Gospel met with from the Jews; who, self-righteous, proud, and exclusive, disdained the meek and lowly Preacher, despised and mocked His invitations (Is. liii. 2, 3; St. Matt. xiii. 55; St. Luke iv. 22, 28, 29), insulted both Him and His messengers (compare 2 Chron. xxx. 10), and at last wickedly murdered both Him and them.

The rejectors of the invitation are divided into two classes; representing respectively those who are carelessly indifferent to the message of God's ministers, and those who are hostile to it.

The first of these classes is again subdivided into two parties: viz., those who are intent on enjoying that which they have *already acquired* of this world's goods, their farms or estates; and those who have this only *in prospect*, and who are, therefore, engrossed about buying and selling and getting gain. Compare the parables of 'The Sower,' and 'The Rich Fool.'

The second class is guilty of outrage which is presented in a *threefold* gradation: they 'took,' *i. e.* laid violent hands on His servants (Acts iv. 3, v. 18, viii. 3); they 'entreated them spitefully' (Acts v. 40, xiv. 5, 19, xvii. 5, xxi. 30); and 'slew them' (Acts vii. 58, xii. 1-3). All this persecution and martyrdom had been foretold by Christ Himself (St. Matt. xxiii. 34).

In the parables of 'The Barren Fig-tree,' and 'The Vineyard let out to Husbandmen,' we have seen the sentence of condemnation *passed*; here we see its *execution*. It must be kept in mind that the persons invited stand in the relation of *subjects*, and are, therefore, treated as *rebels* as well as murderers.

By God's 'armies' (see Is. xiii. 4, 5) are here meant the Roman armies, under Titus; who were, though they knew it not, executing *God's* wrath to the uttermost upon the guilty Jewish nation: thus fulfilling the prophecies of Daniel (ix. 26) and of our Saviour (St. Luke xix. 41-44). Josephus says, that 'during these wars eleven hundred thousand Jews perished, and Jerusalem was so consumed and laid waste, as that all men conceived it could never be built again.'

Other persons, Grotius among the number, interpret the 'armies' of God to be His angels, by whose ministry He acts (1 Kings xxii. 19; St. Luke ii. 13): they execute His commands, and carry into effect His judgments. They brought famine, pestilence, and war on Jerusalem, *by means of* the Romans.

In either case we may here see that God *does* 'make the wrath of man to praise Him' (Ps. lxxvi. 10), by fulfilling the purposes of His providence (compare Is. x. 5, &c., xlv. 28, xlv. 1; Jer. xxv. 9, xxvii. 6, xliii. 10).

The guests first bidden were not 'worthy:' *i. e.*, they were not *disposed to receive* the invitation so earnestly and repeatedly offered to them. The same word is used in a similar sense, St. Matt. x. 11-13.

The servants of Christ were, therefore, sent forth into the 'highways;' first to the Jews dispersed throughout the different countries around Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles (Acts xiii. 46, xviii. 4-6, xxviii. 28). This supply of the empty places by persons who had not, in the first instance, been invited, is illustrated by St. Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

The servants 'gathered together all,' &c. The *visible* Church is made up of good and bad. The sincere and the insincere, the hypocrite and the believer, alike *profess* the faith of Christ crucified (see parables of 'The Tares,' and 'The Net'). A complete and final separation will be made when Christ comes to judge the quick and dead (St. Matt. xxv.).

In the sequel of the parable we find that not only the original guests, but also some of those admitted in their stead, were found unworthy.

It was the custom of the East, as early as the time of Joseph (Gen. xlv. 22), for kings and persons of high rank to bestow robes upon those whom they wished to honour (1 Sam. xviii. 4; Dan. v. 7; Esther vi. 8).

This custom would lead to the keeping of stores of robes (2 Kings x. 22; Job xxvii. 16); and this again explains those passages which represent the perishable nature of earthly treasure, as being liable to injury from *moths* as well as from rust (St. Matt. vi. 19; St. James v. 2).

These gifts were generally bestowed on festive occasions (St. Luke xv. 22), and were, no doubt, provided in the

present instance, as it could not be expected that strangers and travellers would have the necessary changes of raiment for such an unexpected invitation.

One person, however, satisfied with his own apparel, appears to have rejected the proffered robe, and thereby offered a grievous insult to the giver. He remained unnoticed till the king entered to view the company. Being questioned regarding this conduct, he was *speechless*; which would not likely have been the case if he had had any valid excuse to make. For not conforming to the rules of the banquet this unworthy guest was therefore excluded and punished, by being thrown into a dark dungeon, where weeping and vexation were his portion.

Nothing is more common in Scripture than to represent the virtues or vices of men by a robe or dress; and the emblem is a most fitting one, since in it mainly consists the beauty or deformity of the wearers (Ps. cix. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 16; Job xxix. 14; see also Col. iii. 12-14; 1 Pet. iv. 8, v. 5).

Hence the wedding-garment is taken by some to mean *personal* holiness, which is evidently the signification attached to it in the first exhortation in the Communion Service. Others understand by it *the imputed righteousness of Christ*. The difference between these interpretations seems to be unimportant, since sanctification and justification are inseparably connected, and the Church is described by the Psalmist as possessing *both* under the figure of a bride (Ps. xlv. 13). The metaphor of a robe is also applied to *both* in the New Testament (Gal. iii. 27; Rev. iii. 18; Eph. iv. 24; Rev. xix. 7, 8).

In this part of the parable we are taught that hypocrites will intrude among real believers, and remain till detected at the last day by God, Who trieth the very heart and reins (2 Tim. ii. 19).

The ministering attendants here (*δίακονος*), who are different both in name and office from the servants (*δούλος*) who invited and brought in the guests, can be none other than the holy angels (compare St. Matt. xiii. 41-49; St. Luke xix. 24).

The 'binding hand and foot' denotes the utter helplessness to which every proud opposer or despiser of the Gospel will be reduced (Heb. x. 31; Job xv. 25, 26).

In the command, 'take him away,' is implied a final and entire exclusion from the Church glorious and triumphant in Heaven, the *perfected* Kingdom of God.

The casting into 'outer darkness,' where are 'weeping and gnashing of teeth,' indicates the state of unutterable anguish prepared for God's enemies (see 2 Thess. i. 7-9).

The parable ends, like that of 'The Labourers in the Vineyard,' with the proverbial expression, 'Many are called, but few chosen.' In *that* parable, the saying implied the rejection of the Jews; in *this*, the rejection of all, whether Jew or Gentile, who merely make an outward profession of Christianity, and do not inwardly in the heart receive and obey the truths of the Gospel.

QUESTIONS.

In the parable of 'The Vineyard let out to Husbandmen,' how did Christ set forth the relationship of the Jews to God? In what does the present parable differ from that? What would the contempt of their privileges bring upon them? What is meant by the 'Kingdom of Heaven'? Who is meant by the King? Who by His Son? What are we to understand by the Marriage? Does Christ ever speak of Himself under the character of a bridegroom or spouse? Who else speak of Him under the same title? Who is His bride or wife? Give an illustration of this relationship from the Old Testament. Give a similar illustration from the New. Why is the word, here translated 'marriage,' in the plural number in the original language? Illustrate this custom by any examples. What is to be understood by the Feast? Quote an illustration of this from Scripture. Who were the servants *first* sent out, and what was their mission? Who were the servants sent out at the time of the banquet itself? Was it the custom to send a *second* invitation? Prove this from Scripture. How were the servants treated? With what does this treatment correspond? Show, from Scripture, the fulfilment of this. Into how many classes are the rejectors of the invitation divided? Whom do they represent? How are the carelessly indifferent further subdivided? How many degrees of guilt are observable among the absolutely hostile? Illustrate the first. The second. The third. Had this treatment ever been predicted? What did the king do upon hearing of these outrages? How does the present parable differ in this respect from those of 'The Barren Fig-tree' and 'The Vineyard let out'? Who were God's armies on the present occasion? What prophecies did

they fulfil? What testimony have we to the fact of the fulfilment? Show, from Scripture, that God uses the instrumentality of man in executing the purposes of His providence. What is meant by the guests not being 'worthy'? What were the servants now bidden to do? What does this represent? How does St. Paul illustrate this supply of the empty places? What did the servants accordingly do? What feature in Christ's visible Church is here represented? Illustrate the same from other parables. What does the following part of the parable show? In Eastern countries, was the giving of a dress or robe considered a mark of honour? Illustrate this from Scripture. What would this custom lead to? What passages of Scripture does this custom throw light upon? On what occasions would these gifts naturally be bestowed? Why is it probable that robes would be provided on the present occasion? How did one of the guests, nevertheless, act? In what light is contempt of an offered gift generally viewed? Had this guest any excuse to offer? How was this shown? How was he punished? Under what figure are the virtues and vices of men often represented in Scripture? What different interpretations have been given of the 'wedding-garment'? Show that these different views are unimportant. Is the Church anywhere described as possessing both sanctification and justification? Show, from Scripture, that the same metaphor is applied to both. Give instances of *particular* virtues being described under the same figure. Which of these views is sanctioned by our Liturgy? Where? What does the fact of the man's remaining unnoticed by the company teach us? Who are meant by the 'servants' by whom the man was punished? How do we know that they are not the same as those who were sent with the invitation? What other parables clearly distinguish between the present ministers of the kingdom and the future executioners of God's wrath? What does the 'binding hand and foot' show? What is implied in his being 'taken away'? What by the 'casting into outer darkness'? How does the parable end? What kind of an expression may this be? Does it form the conclusion to any other parable? What is its meaning there? What, in addition, is implied here? How does St. Paul confirm this view?

THE GREAT SUPPER.

St. Luke xiv. 15-24.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many :

17 And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

NOTES.

THE circumstance which gave rise to the present parable was an invitation given by a Pharisee of some distinction to our Saviour to dine with him. Observing the eagerness which was manifested by the guests to obtain the uppermost seats at the table, Jesus reprov'd their desire of distinction in terms similar to those of the wise man (Prov. xxv. 6, 7); and endeavoured to convince them how much better it was for a man to place himself rather *below* than *above* the place befitting his rank; since humility was a virtue which, instead of debasing, raised and exalted the person by whom it was practised.

Turning to His host, the Saviour recommended him, when he made an entertainment, not to invite his rich relations and neighbours, who would ask him again in return, but rather to invite those to whom it would be an act of charity. We are not to understand from this, that the exercise of hospitality towards our friends or neighbours

is to be wholly neglected ; since our Saviour Himself, on other occasions, sanctioned such social meetings : nor is it necessary, literally, to invite the poor and needy to our tables ; the spirit of the precept being sufficiently observed if we, according to our means and opportunity, endeavour to provide them with suitable relief at their own homes. All that is meant here is, that relieving the distressed ought to take precedence of such social entertainments.

Christ's declaration, that they who acted in the manner He described should be 'recompensed at the resurrection of the just,' led one of the company to exclaim, 'How blessed it would be to eat and drink in the kingdom of God!'—including himself, of course, as a sharer in that blessedness. The Jews had formed grossly material conceptions of the Messiah's kingdom, and believed that they, as the chosen people of God, must in any case be admitted into it, inasmuch as they had been invited to enter and enjoy that great feast : they did not consider whether they had or had not sincerely accepted the invitation.

The following parable is intended to show that, on account of these erroneous notions of *temporal* happiness, the heavenly life which they, *in prospect*, fancied would be so blessed a period, would, *when entered upon*, be neglected and despised ; so little, in reality, was it coveted.

By 'the man' who made the feast we are to understand, as in the last parable, God the Father ; and by 'the Great Supper,' the Gospel dispensation—ministering to men, as it does, all that they can desire to make them happy. Refer to the former parable for illustrations.*

By the 'many' who were bidden, we are to understand the Jewish nation *in general* ; and the rulers of the nation, the chief priests, &c., *in particular* : in opposition to the

* It is worthy of remark here that St. Luke's parables have a character quite peculiar. It has been said that his are the parables of *mercy*, as St. Matthew's are of *judgment* : and it is well worth the reader's study to trace this out. But more than this, St. Matthew—as we have before remarked—in writing for Jews, is careful to bring out the *kingly* idea in his parables ; St. Luke, on the other hand, addressing himself to the Gentiles, is universal in his language. It may seem a minute point, but it is a very characteristic one, and applies not only to the parables but to several passages in this Gospel—that whereas St. Matthew, in the parable of 'The Wedding Garment,' speaks of the *king* who made a marriage feast, St. Luke in this very similar parable makes the giver of the feast 'a certain *man*.'

Gentiles in the one case, and the publicans and sinners—the most despised portion of the people—in the other.

The 'servant sent out at supper time,' to remind those who were bidden, represents John the Baptist, Christ, and the Apostles; who, one and all, proclaimed that now 'all things were ready,' and invited their hearers to enter at once on the enjoyment of those good things, which were no longer good things in the distance, but actually 'at hand.' Refer to last parable.

The guests were not now asked for the *first* time, but had already accepted the invitation when the day was appointed; they were, therefore, already pledged to attend at the hour when they might be summoned. They were not taken unawares, and could not, therefore, either in consistency or courtesy, plead any prior engagement; they could not now draw back without violating their word, and insulting the master of the feast. All this is in exact accordance with established custom everywhere. See the second exhortation in the Communion Service.

The excuses which were sent referred to occupations which in themselves were quite lawful, but which were, as far as this invitation was concerned, pursued at an improper season. In like manner it may be found at last that the ruin of the majority of the wicked is attributable, not so much to positive sin, as to things, lawful, innocent, or even necessary; but which become sinful because they are made of more importance than the service of God (St. Luke x. 40, 41).

The foundation of the *first* excuse is *pride*. The person had enlarged his estate, and would thus, no doubt, acquire more power and influence among his fellow-men (compare Dan. iv. 30).

The foundation of the *second* excuse is *worldly care and covetousness*; the desire of getting what the other already had (compare former parable).

The foundation of the *third* excuse is *pleasure*. This man had a marriage feast of his own, and therefore he bluntly refuses to come.

The two first are *open* manifestations of worldliness, and therefore they excuse themselves civilly; the next is a manifestation of the same spirit, but is not so apparent. He is, therefore, so satisfied with his excuse, that he will

not take the trouble to answer the invitation with common courtesy.

Since so great danger arises from an abuse of things lawful, or, as Judge Hale said, since 'we are ruined by things allowed,' we ought to give earnest attention, and assent to the advice of St. Paul on this very point (1 Cor. vii. 22-31; see also St. Luke xiv. 26).

Those who despised the feast being the leading characters of the Jewish nation, 'the blind and the lame, &c.,' taken in from the streets, are the remainder of the nation; who were, generally speaking, the poor and despised, the publicans and sinners, who welcomed the Messiah (see St. John vii. 48, 49).

'Still there was room.' The master of the feast therefore sent out of the city into the roads and fields, to the despised inhabitants of the country, that his house might be filled. The Gentiles are represented by this class.

From the words 'compel them to come in,' some commentators, as St. Augustine, have maintained the lawfulness of using force or violence in propagating the Gospel when other means may have proved ineffectual. The original word (*ἀνάγκασον*) signifies 'to force, compel, or induce to act from powerful motives.' It is the same word which is used in the eighteenth verse, and translated 'must needs;' so that there is the same reason to suppose that he was compelled by force to visit his purchase, as there is to suppose that any were constrained by violence to accept the invitation. The same word, with the same meaning, is also used in St. Matt. xiv. 22; Gal. ii. 14.

It is, therefore, evident that no further 'compulsion' * was designed than earnest entreaty, which, indeed, was all that *one* servant could use towards a *multitude*.

In regard to those who were originally invited, he revokes the invitation, and sentences them to final exclusion from the feast, even though on the strength of their former invitation they should afterwards earnestly claim admission (compare Prov. i. 24-28; St. Matt. xxv. 11, 12).

This signifies exclusion from the Kingdom of God, and

* The word 'press' would perhaps better convey the meaning here intended, since the travellers would be slow to believe that the invitation was serious, and would therefore require to be repeatedly pressed. (Compare 2 Cor. v. 20.)

from all the blessings of Christ's Church ; and, although it is not here expressed, that exclusion implies everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. i. 9).

QUESTIONS.

What gave rise to the present parable? What conduct of the guests did our Lord observe? How did He reprove them? What was the advice of Solomon on the same subject? What did our Lord rather advise them to do? What reason did He give? What proverbial expression did He use? Quote some other passages to the same effect. What advice did our Lord next give to the host? Is this advice to be understood literally? What is the spirit of the precept? When did He say that those who followed His precept would be recompensed? What exclamation did this call forth? What ideas prevailed among the Jews at this time in reference to the Kingdom of God? How did our Saviour correct these notions? Who is meant by the 'certain man' that made the feast? What is meant by the 'Great Supper'? Why? Illustrate this from Scripture. Who were the 'many' that were first bidden? What message did He send at supper time? Whom does the 'servant' represent? Illustrate this from Scripture. Was it usual to summon the guests at the time of the banquet itself? Were the occupations of those who refused to come lawful or unlawful? Where, then, did the fault lie? What was the foundation of the *first* excuse? What was the foundation of the *second* excuse? What was the foundation of the *third* excuse? What did the master of the feast now tell the servant to do? Whom do those first brought in represent? Whither was the servant next sent? Whom do those now brought in represent? What may we understand by the words 'compel them to come in'? What is the only compulsion which *one* man can use to a great many? What English word would sufficiently express the meaning? Give an example of this sort of compulsion. What sentence was passed on those originally invited? Show that even repentance may be too late. What more is implied, though not expressed, in this exclusion from the feast?

THE MAN BUILDING A TOWER—THE KING GOING TO WAR.

St. Luke xiv. 28-33.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth

not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

NOTES.



OUR SAVIOUR, having left the Pharisee's house, and being as usual attended by multitudes, who—although favourably disposed towards Him—were yet irresolute and wavering, turns to them with an earnest address, and summons them to a decision.

It was a custom of the Jewish doctors to lay before their proselytes the inconveniences to which they would be exposed in embracing their doctrines; and, in like manner, our Saviour sets before His hearers two things which might deter them from embracing His religion: viz., the difficulty of the duties that would be required of them; and, the greatness of the sufferings to which they would be exposed.

And here let us note that our Lord, knowing how His Holy Spirit would work in the Church as He had wrought in the prophets and holy men of old, uses words which seem actually to contradict the fifth Commandment. For He knew that the same Spirit through whom the Ten Commandments were given to Moses would explain the words of Jesus, and teach men how to put them in harmony—the old and the new. He takes no pains to soften His words down: He knows that the Holy Ghost will interpret them to all faithful hearts.

He uses the strongest expression to show how paramount are His claims upon our obedience, and the force of His words is a strong proof of His Divinity. What *mere* man could dare to say that the sacred claims of father and mother, wife and children, were as nothing compared with his?

He assures them that no man could be His disciple who allowed attachment to his relatives, or engrossing care about himself, to interfere with His own superior claims upon his love; and that, as His disciples must take up their cross and be ready at His call to leave their families, their occupations, and possessions, a prudent man will consider well beforehand what such a profession will cost him, lest he fail in the day of trial.*

Our Saviour now, in two parables, shows that we have to look for difficulties in our way when we determine to serve God. This He does, not to deter any persons, but to show them their natural weakness and the necessity for supernatural assistance.

The first comparison is taken from a building, for the completion of which the necessary sum of money must be provided. The expression 'tower' is to be understood of some splendid palace-like edifice: for the object of the parable requires something extraordinary, which cannot be reached by common means. The comparison of inward spiritual effort and labour to workmanship, such as building, is frequent in Scripture (St. Matt. vii. 24; Eph. ii. 20-22; 2 Tim. ii. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 10, ix. 1).

The second comparison is taken from a conflict, which a man will only undertake when he believes himself possessed of powers, in some measure at least, adequate to the occasion. If two princes be at war, and if one of them should find himself weak, he will set himself, if possible, to plead for terms of peace.

The Christian profession is, in many places of Scripture, represented as a conflict, or struggle (1 Cor. ix. 24-26, xvi. 13; 1 Thess. v. 8; 1 Tim. i. 18, vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7), against spiritual enemies far more powerful than we are, whose attacks we can never withstand, unless we put on the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 11-17).

* The word 'hate,' in the sense of 'to love less than,' is used also in Mal. i. 2, 3; Deut. xxi. 15-17. (Compare Matt. x. 37.)

The thoughtless builder, who exposed himself to ridicule by commencing a tower without the means of finishing it, and the improvident king, who rushed into war with one who was manifestly more powerful than himself, and who was consequently obliged to submit to the terms of peace dictated by his enemy, both represent the man who undertakes the service of Christ without making the necessary provision and furniture. When trial comes, his strength will utterly fail him. The wise builder is he who, counting up his means, finds that he has not enough to carry through his work, and that if he trusts to his own resources, he shall never have enough. Therefore he renounces all that he has, that he may lay hold upon the riches of Christ. We have already, more than once, pointed out how, when our Lord seems to be merely repeating Himself in His parables, He is really teaching further truth. It is so here. The builder represents one who contemplates Christianity as the doing of *good and noble* works; the other, one who looks on it as the *rooting out of evil habits*, the victory over spiritual enemies.

Here follow, most appropriately, the words, 'Salt is good,' &c., which St. Matthew has embodied in the Sermon on the Mount (v. 13), and which St. Mark (ix. 50) has in another connection. The words themselves are of such a kind that we may easily suppose them to have been spoken on various occasions, just like the words 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' Our Saviour had on this occasion been speaking of admission into the company of His disciples, and of the qualifications necessary to this. The remark is therefore very appropriate, that, great and noble as the vocation was to act on the community as 'the salt of the earth' preserving it from corruption, so great also would be the danger if a man did not fulfil that vocation; for, in that case, he would not merely fail of producing any beneficial effect, but would also bring disgrace upon himself.

QUESTIONS.

What place had our Saviour just left? By whom was He attended? What were their feelings at this time towards the Saviour? To what does He accordingly summon them?

How many things might hinder them from becoming His disciples? What must Christ's disciples be ready to give up? What must they be ready to endure? What, then, would prudence in embracing their faith dictate? What is the meaning of the word 'hate' in this passage? Why is it impossible that it can here have its usual meaning? Quote other passages in support of this view. Explain the meaning from a parallel passage. In the two parables which follow, what does our Lord show to be necessary? With what design does He show this? What is the *first* comparison used? How must the word 'tower' be understood? Why? Quote other passages in which there is a comparison of spiritual labour to workmanship of this sort. What is the *second* comparison used? Illustrate from Scripture the comparison of the Christian profession with a conflict. Against what enemies have we to contend? On what conditions alone may we hope for success in this warfare? What kind of professing Christian is represented by the thoughtless builder or the imprudent king? Under what two aspects is the Christian life contemplated in the two comparisons? With what proverbial expression does our Saviour conclude? Where else is this expression found? How were Christ's disciples to act upon the world? What would the consequence be if they wanted the necessary qualifications?

THE LOST SHEEP.

St. Luke xv. 1-7.

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him :

2 And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ?

5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me ; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

St. Matt. xviii.

NOTES.

THE great end of Christ's coming into the world was 'to save sinners' (St. Matt. i. 21). In order to accomplish this end, He embraced every possible opportunity for reclaiming transgressors of God's law, and did not scruple, as occasion required, to eat and drink with them.

Among these, we are informed by St. Luke, were many publicans. The publicans were of two classes: viz. Roman knights of the highest respectability, who farmed the revenues of the empire; and men of inferior stamp, who were employed by them as collectors, and who had the reputation of abusing their trust, and exacting by extortion and fraud more than was legally due. These latter were the publicans who are so frequently mentioned in the Gospels.

The Scribes and Pharisees reckoned these persons equally unworthy with gross sinners and heathens of being conversed with, although this might be with a design of bringing them back from their evil courses (St. Luke v. 30, vii. 39). Accordingly, they murmured against and censured our Saviour for being too familiar

with these men; overlooking the great fact that He held intercourse with them as their *Physician*, not as their *Companion*.

Our Saviour vindicates His conduct in the three following parables; in which are strikingly contrasted the rejoicing of the angels of God, and even of God Himself, at the conversion of a sinner, with the narrow-minded bigotry and envious repinings of the murmuring Jews.

The third parable is supplementary to the other two; each being incomplete in itself: the first two setting forth God's love in *seeking* lost man, while nothing is said of the part which man takes in the work of conversion—the figures which are used not allowing of this; the third showing the rise and growth of that repentance which enables man to *return* to God, without mentioning the *antecedent cause* of that repentance, viz. the Holy Ghost, who must have moved him to return to his Father. As examples of other supplementary parables, see the Mustard Seed and the Leaven; the Hid Treasure and the Precious Pearl; the Tares and the Net; the Talents and the Pounds.

The first parable is derived from a similitude which is frequently employed in the Old Testament, where the care and watchfulness of God for His people are often compared to those of a *shepherd* (Psalm xxiii. 1, lxxx. 1; Is. xl. 11). The Jewish rulers are often spoken of as faithless shepherds (Ezek. xxxiv. 1–6; Zech. xi. 16, 17): the very form of viewing the relation between God and His people, used in the parable, is taken from the Old Testament (Jer. i. 6; Ezek. xxxiv. 11–16: see also Ps. cxix. 176; Is. liii. 6).

The same comparison is used in the New Testament. Thus our Saviour calls Himself 'the Good Shepherd' (St. John x.), and says of Himself, that He 'is come to seek and to save that which is lost' (St. Luke xix. 10: see also 1 Pet. ii. 25).

As the anxious shepherd sought diligently among the mountains for his one lost sheep, so our Lord, by His personal ministry and that of His apostles, preached the Gospel of Salvation; first to 'the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel' (Matt. x. 6), and next, going from the mountains of Israel to the mountains of the Gentiles (see

Is. lii. 7 ; and compare Rom. x. 12-15), preached that Gospel 'to every creature under Heaven' (Col. i. 23); becoming 'all things to all men that they might save some' (1 Cor. ix. 22).*

While searching for the lost sheep, the shepherd is represented as leaving the ninety-nine others in the wilderness. We are not, however, from this to suppose any indifference on his part in regard to those that had not wandered. On the contrary, they were left in a place of security, their usual pasture-ground; for the word 'wilderness' or 'desert' means sometimes wide extended grassy plains without habitations of men, like some of the European steppes or the American prairies and savannahs (St. Matt. xiv. 15-19).

We are next told that the recovery of the one lost sheep was the cause of joy to the shepherd, who, upon his return home, summoned his friends and neighbours to share in his rejoicing. This represents the joy which the angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, experience upon the repentance of every sinner: they have an actual accession of happiness in connection with every such event (compare St. Luke ii. 9-14). We learn from this, that Heaven and earth form one family (Ephes. iii. 15) joined together by love, 'the bond of perfectness' (Col. iii. 14), 'the communion of saints;' consequently the absence of love on the part of the murmuring Pharisees implied their alienation from this living fellowship.

But we are told that there is *more* joy in Heaven over one repenting sinner than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. We are not from this, however, to infer that repentance is preferable to innocence; any

* 'The Incarnation of the Son of God was a girding of Himself to go after His lost sheep. His whole life upon earth, His entire walk in the flesh, was a following of the strayed one; for this was the very purpose of His coming, namely, 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' And He sought His own 'till He found it.' He was not weary with the greatness of the way; He shrank not when the thorns wounded His flesh and tore His feet. He followed us into the deep of our misery, came under the extremity of our malediction. For He had gone forth to seek His own till He had found it, and would not pause till then. And having found, how tenderly does the shepherd of the parable handle that sheep which has cost him all this labour and fatigue; he does not punish it; he does not smite, nor even harshly drive it back to the fold: nay, he does not deliver it to a servant, but he lays it upon *his own* shoulders, and himself carefully carries it, till he brings it to the fold.'—*Trench.*

more than that one sheep was more valuable than ninety-nine. The statement plainly alludes to the common experience of life. We know that rejoicing may be greater at the recovery of a thing lost, than over what is very much more valuable, but which has never caused any anxiety from being missed. If a member of a family be dangerously ill, so that but little hope is entertained of his getting well again, his unexpected recovery, though as yet far from being complete, will be a source of greater joy to the members of the family than the uninterrupted health of all the others.

Who are those 'just persons who need no repentance?' Some have supposed that in these words our Saviour ironically describes the Pharisees; for, strictly speaking, there never have been, and never can be, any such (Ps. xiv. 2, 3; Eccles. vii. 20; Is. liii. 6; Rom. iii. 10-18). The parable, however, does not seem to admit of this interpretation, for the ninety-nine sheep had *not* wandered. Others suppose the meaning to be 'righteous according to the law;' *i.e.*, who had been kept by the restraints of the law from open and gross transgressions, and thus had not needed to repent of these, like the publicans and sinners (see this exemplified, Phil. iii. 6; St. Matt. xix. 20). In their case, however, the law had failed to act as 'a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ' (Gal. iii. 24), whereas the publicans through repentance had reached Him; thus causing a greater joy in Heaven.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words which are both translated by the same English word 'repentance;' the one (*μετάνοια*) signifies that entire change of mind and character by which men, formerly dead in sin, rise to a life of godliness, turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and thus *begin* the Christian course; the other (*μεταμέλεια*) signifies that repentant sorrow for lapses and failings which are incident to even the best of mankind—a dissatisfaction with one's self for any sin that has been committed (see 2 Cor. vii. 10).

Our Saviour, therefore, by 'just persons who need no repentance,' may mean those who do not require that entire change which is implied in the first of these two words, having experienced it already. They have no need to *begin* the Christian walk, though they may have cause every day

to lament the *slowness of their progress* since they began, and the temptations to which they yield.

This representation of universal joy in Heaven over repentant sinners is a powerful motive to amendment of life; for we are assured that God has not only provided the means of salvation (Rom. iii. 25; Acts v. 31)—thus showing His *willingness* to restore them to favour—but that He *rejoiceth* in their recovery, as if a real accession to His glory and happiness had resulted from that event.

It is also a powerful motive to engage us in promoting, to the utmost of our power and opportunity, the salvation of others; for thereby we may not only 'save a soul from death' (James v. 20), but actually increase the happiness of the Church triumphant, and by consequence augment our own (Dan. xii. 3).

In St. Matthew's Gospel this parable occurs in a different connection. There our Saviour, after warning His disciples to be humble and innocent as a little child, points out to them the care of God for such, as shown in His employment of the Holy Angels in their service, and denounces wrath against those who *offend* * them, *i. e.* against such as cause them to fall into sin. He then, by the parable of 'The Lost Sheep,' shows that, if the care and love of God are so displayed in the redemption of the lowest and least of the children of men, he who causes a little child to err or fall from faith in Christ Jesus is guilty of a most heinous sin.

QUESTIONS.

What was the great end for which Christ came into the world? In whose company, accordingly, do we often find Him? How many classes of publicans were there? Who were the first class? Who were the second? In what estimation was this second class held by the Pharisees? For what, therefore, did they censure our Saviour? In what capacity was our Saviour acting towards these publicans and sinners? How does He vindicate His conduct? What contrast is drawn in these parables? How are the three parables related to each other? Show how they supplement each other. What similitude is used in the first of the three? Whence is this use of it

* 'Offend,' in the Scriptures, means 'to put a stumbling-block in the way of.'

derived? To what is God's care for His people frequently compared? How are the Jewish rulers often spoken of? Show that the very form used in the parable is taken from the Old Testament. Show that the same comparison is used in the New Testament. Where did this shepherd seek his lost sheep? To whom did our Saviour's personal ministry and that of His Apostles at first extend? To whom was the Gospel afterwards preached? Where did the shepherd leave the ninety and nine other sheep? Did this show any indifference towards them on his part? What meaning has the word 'wilderness' or 'desert,' at times in Scripture? What did the shepherd do on his return? What does this represent? Give an instance of the angels rejoicing over men's happiness. To what does the joy of the angels form a striking contrast? How does the Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth appear from this to be related? What is the bond of union? What did the absence of this love on the part of the Pharisees show? Whether is *innocence* or *repentance* more pleasing in God's sight? Was the one sheep more valuable than all the others? What, then, caused the greater joy? Illustrate this from what sometimes takes place among the members of a family. Apply this to the case of a repentant sinner. To whom is it supposed our Saviour refers as 'just persons,' &c.? Prove from Scripture that, strictly speaking, there are no such persons. Does the parable favour this view of the expression? In how many senses is the word 'repentance' used in Scripture? What is the difference in meaning? Apply this distinction to the explanation of the above expression. To what is this joy in Heaven over repentant sinners a powerful motive? Prove that God has provided the means of salvation to mankind. What feeling towards man does this show Him to have? What *additional* encouragement does the parable afford? To what duty towards our fellow-men does this joy of the angels excite? Whose happiness do we hereby promote? State the connection in which this parable occurs in St. Matthew's Gospel.

THE LOST PIECE OF MONEY.

St. Luke xv. 8-10.

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neigh-

bours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

NOTES.

THAS already been stated that many of our Lord's parables, which at first sight appear to teach exactly the same lesson, exhibit, when more closely examined, important differences. Thus, 'The Mustard Seed' and 'The Leaven,'—'The Hid Treasure' and 'The Precious Pearl,'—'The Tares' and 'The Net,'—'The Talents' and 'The Pounds,' are examples of the same *general* truths taught; but they also contain many essential points of difference. It is the same with the present parable and that which precedes it, viz. 'The Lost Sheep.'

In the parable of 'The Lost Sheep,' the restorer of the one that was lost is our Saviour Himself, the *second* person in the ever Blessed Trinity; in the present parable it is the Holy Spirit, the *third* person, acting in and through the Church, which, as well as the Divine Wisdom itself, is often personified as 'a woman' (Prov. i. 20, iii. 13, iv. 5; Rev. xix. 7, 8, xxii. 17: see also the parable of 'The Leaven,' St. Matt. xiii. 33). In the next parable, viz. that of 'The Prodigal Son,' God the Father, the *first* person, appears to welcome His repentant son; and thus, in these three parables, we have all the persons of the Blessed Trinity engaged in the work of man's redemption.

The piece of money which is here mentioned—the Greek drachma—comes from a word which means 'to hold in the hollow or palm of the hand;' because six oboli, to which it was equal in value, were as much as a man could

hold in the palm of his hand. The drachma was a common Greek coin; and, like the Roman denarius—the penny of the New Testament—was worth about $7\frac{3}{4}d.$ of our money. See parable of 'The Labourers in the Vineyard,' St. Matt. xx.

To this coin the soul of man is compared as it existed in its original beauty,—having the image of the great Sovereign of the universe stamped upon it (Gen. i. 27; Eph. iv. 24).

In man's present state of moral corruption, he is compared to a piece of beautiful coin, lost for a time in the dust of the earth, its former lustre tarnished, and its value diminished. This is the effect also of the fatal influence of sin upon the soul; defacing the Divine image after which it was created (Rom. viii. 7), though not utterly destroying all traces of it. The same similitude of tarnished coin is used in other parts of Scripture to express the degeneracy of the soul, through the ascendancy of vicious appetites and desires (Lam. iv. i. 2; Is. i. 22; Jer. vi. 30).

Again, as a piece of coin lost in the dust of the earth is of no value to the owner until found and cleansed; so the human soul, until it is sanctified and renewed by the Holy Ghost, is lost to God, and incapable of fulfilling the purposes of its being, or of relishing its proper happiness (St. John iii. 3).

But it is not suffered to be lost, without an endeavour to recover it and restore it to its proper use. The owner lights a candle and sweeps the house diligently until she finds the lost coin; even so, the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of the Church, gives diligence to recover the lost sinner; to bring back the money of God to His treasury, from which it originally proceeded. The 'candle' is the Word of God, held forth by the Church, which exercises the ministry of the word (Ps. cxix. 105; St. Matt. v. 14, 15; Eph. v. 13; Phil. ii. 15, 16).

In the 'sweeping of the house,' which could not be done without raising much dust, we have another picture of the admixture of good and bad in the visible Church, which was already shown in the parables of 'The Tares' and 'The Net.' We have, in addition, some of the effects produced by the preaching of the Word: viz., latent aver-

sion to the truth, developed into open enmity; torpid alienation from God, changed into active hostility; the preachers charged with 'troubling Israel,' as Ahab charged Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 17), and with 'turning the world upside down,' as the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica charged Paul and Silas (Acts xvii. 6).

Another point of difference between this and the preceding parable is, that the sheep had strayed from the fold, and was found among the mountains of the wilderness; whereas the piece of money was lost *in the house*, and there, in consequence, it is sought again.

This recovery of the lost coin, i.e. the restoration of a lost sinner, is a cause of 'joy in the presence of the angels of God.' It is not said *in heaven*, as in the last parable; and we may therefore apply it to the redeemed and elect creation *upon earth*—to the angels executing their ministry here (Heb. i. 14; St. Matt. xviii. 10), who are present in the congregation of the faithful (1 Cor. xi. 10); who are offended at anything unseemly among them, but who rejoice when a sinner is converted. If the sons of God shouted for joy at the creation of the world (Job xxxviii. 7), how much more will they rejoice when summoned by Christ's Church to join in hymns of praise and thanksgiving for a newer and higher creation into the light of everlasting life, even the recovery of a lost soul (Eph. iii. 10; 1 Peter i. 12)!

QUESTIONS.

In the former parable, who is meant by the restorer of the lost sheep? In the present parable, who is meant by the person that finds the money? Through what agency does the Holy Spirit usually operate? How is the Divine Wisdom personified in Scripture? How is the Church personified? Is a similar comparison used in any other parable? In the succeeding parable of the Prodigal Son, who welcomes back the prodigal? Taking the three parables, what great truths do they represent? Give other examples of parables teaching the same *general* truths and yet having many important differences. What is the name of the piece of silver mentioned in the parable? What is its derivation? What its worth? What other Scriptural coin was of the same value? What is here compared to a coin? Whose image did it originally bear?

What has since tarnished its lustre? To what may the soul of man be now compared? What is the influence of sinful passions upon the Divine image? Illustrate the same similitude of debased coin from other passages. Before the lost coin can be of any value, what must be done? What work on the soul does this represent? Show its necessity. What is meant by the 'lighting of the candle'? By whom exercised? What would the sweeping of the house cause? What does this represent? What point of difference is there between the lost sheep and the piece of money as to the place where each was found? Mention another point of difference. Prove that Christ's people are His own property. Prove that they are only a trust committed to the Church. Mention another point of difference. [Which *I* had lost,—which *was* lost.] What does this show on the part of the woman? What does the restoration of a sinner to the bosom of Christ's Church cause? Is there any difference of expression here? Prove that the Holy angels are employed in ministering to man. In what assemblies may they be present? How are they likely to be affected there? How are they said to have acted at the creation of the material world? How are they represented as feeling towards the new creation of man's soul? To what does the Church therefore summon them?

THE PRODIGAL SON.

St. Luke xv. 11-32.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons :

12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger !

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his ser-

vants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet :

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it* ; and let us eat, and be merry :

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in : therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends :

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

NOTES.



THE third parable in which our Saviour vindicates His conduct in associating with publicans and sinners, and contrasts the gracious reception of such by God's mercy with the harsh and uncharitable treatment of them by the Pharisees—is that of

'The Prodigal Son.' It forms the counterpart to the two preceding parables, as it shows the part which is taken by man himself in the work of conversion, viz., 'his turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God' (Joel ii. 12, 13). We have here man's going astray minutely set forth, step by step; and, next, his return to repentance and faith: while in the two preceding parables prominence was rather given to the operations of God the Son and of God the Holy Ghost.

God is here represented as a Father (see also the parable of 'The Two Sons'), which He is in *four* ways, viz.—1st, of our Lord Jesus Christ by nature and from eternity (1 John i. 3); 2nd, of the universe by creation (Mal. ii. 10; Acts xvii. 28); 3rd, of man, because He formed him in His own image (Gen. i. 27: compare Eph. iv. 24); and 4th, of Christians by adoption (St. John iii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 3; Gal. iv. 5, 6; Rom. viii. 15-17).

In regard to the two sons, there have always been two different interpretations; some supposing them to represent respectively the Jews and Gentiles, to whom resemblance is easily traced. But the beginning of the chapter shows that, *primarily*, the Prodigal stands for the penitent sinner, such as frequently came to our Saviour while upon earth; and the elder brother for the narrow-hearted, self-approving Pharisee.

The request of the younger that he might receive *at once* that portion of property which would fall to him at his father's death (see Deut. xxi. 17), was wrong in two respects, 1st, in speaking of it as a *right* that belonged to him, whereas his father had perfect power to disinherit him; 2nd, in supposing himself able to manage it, which his subsequent conduct showed he was not.

His motive in asking for his share of the inheritance is shown by his conduct 'not many days after.' He collected all that had been given to him, and left the wholesome restraints of his father's house for a distant country, where he might indulge his dissolute inclinations in the most abandoned and reckless company.

In this conduct we see the desire of the natural man to be independent of God, and to lay out his life according to his own will and for his own pleasure. This was the first error of Adam and Eve. Instead of depending upon God,

they desired to be as gods themselves (Gen. iii. 5, 6). It was this which caused the expulsion of the rebel angels from Heaven (Is. xiv. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 6). This was also one of the temptations by means of which Satan assailed our Saviour (St. Matt. iv.).

By the father's compliance with the request, we learn also the nature of God's dealings with man. He has constituted him a being with a free will (Deut. xxx. 19; Prov. i. 24); and when God's service no longer appears to him a 'perfect freedom,' or when man promises himself something better elsewhere, he is allowed to make the trial.

By the 'gathering together of all,' and departing to a distant country, is meant the collecting of all a man's energies and powers with the deliberate determination of securing, by their help, all the gratification possible from the world, *i. e.* openly preferring the creature to the Creator.

The 'far country' signifies a state of sin in which God is far from the thoughts (Ps. x. 4, 5), and in which the person himself is at a distance from the favour and protection of Almighty God.

A mighty spiritual famine arose, such as was predicted by Amos (viii. 11)—a famine of everything on which the soul of man can live. The Prodigal begins to feel the unsatisfying nature of worldly enjoyments, and to long for something better (Jer. ii. 13, 19, xvii. 5, 6). Having exhausted his means on riotous living, he begins to be in want; but having confidence still in his own resources, and being perhaps actuated by false shame, he does not at first obey this warning to return home. He hires himself out to a tyrannical master for mere subsistence, and is doomed to submit to the meanest drudgery and the hardest fare. His humiliation and distress could not have been represented more impressively to a Jewish audience than by the mention of the repulsive occupation to which he was driven, that of keeping swine, and of his longing to partake of the 'husks'* which were defiled by these unclean animals; both of which punishments the circumstances of

* These husks denote the fruit of the carob-tree, which, in the East, is commonly used as food for swine. It is also called 'St. John's bread,' from a tradition that it formed a portion of the food of St. John the Baptist in the wilderness.

his early life must have rendered to him peculiarly wretched and disgusting.

This part of the parable teaches the misery of those who are the slaves of sin, their loathsome employment and deep degradation (Eph. iv. 19; Tit. iii. 3). A life of vice is, at best, a state of wretchedness and slavery; and is always so described in Holy Scripture (Rom. vi. 17, 20; Is. i. 4). The fruitless attempt of the Prodigal to satisfy his hunger with the husks teaches the *folly* of man's seeking, through indulgence of his appetites, to appease the hunger of his soul. The pleasures of sin, although they may promise much and lasting enjoyment, invariably end in misery and remorse (Job xx. 12-14; Prov. xi. 19).

The amendment of the Prodigal is strikingly expressed by the phrase 'came to himself,' which indicates the absurdity and madness of the excess of rioting and wantonness in which he had indulged, implying a state of insanity or mental delusion. In like manner, the condition of the sinner is represented in Scripture as one of folly and madness (Eccles. ix. 3); and especially in the book of Proverbs, by the constant recurrence of the terms 'fool,' 'foolish,' &c.*

As the distresses of the Prodigal, his poverty, hunger, &c., were the means of awakening him to reflection, and were thus in reality highly beneficial, so the miseries consequent upon sin, though the expression of God's anger against *sin*, are often the signs of His love for the *sinner* (Hos. ii. 6-8, 14-16). And hence we have here, without any express mention of it, as in the two preceding parables, the repentance-awakening grace of God seeking after lost man for his restoration.

The nature of the Prodigal's repentance shows it to be of a pure character, and therefore divinely wrought. In his confession there is *conviction of sin*—the essence of which consists in its being a transgression of God's will—'against Heaven and before thee' (compare Ps. li. 4). Next, in the use of the term 'Father,' we see his *ground of confidence*, viz., the adoption of sonship which he had received; which relationship, as it was not constituted by his obedience, so it was not cancelled by his disobedience (Is.

* One of the names for repentance, which is frequently used by the early Fathers, is the word signifying 'becoming wise again.'

xxx. 1). Next we have *confession*, which is invariably a mark of true penitence. He makes no excuse; he only implores mercy. A want of this mark is a sure sign of continued obduracy (Job ix. 20; Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9, 10). Next we see *humility* strongly marked, in the confession that he had justly forfeited all his former privileges, and was 'no more worthy, &c.' And, lastly, there is a full purpose of beginning a new course of life, followed by an immediate attempt to do so. 'I will arise and go to my father'—'And he arose and came to his father.'

The love of the father, and his readiness to forgive, are indicated by the circumstance that he does not wait for his son's return, but hastens to meet him. There is no upbraiding, no severe reproaches for his profligate behaviour. The father embraces him affectionately, and gives him the kiss of reconciliation and peace (Gen. xxxiii. 4; 2 Sam. xiv. 33). With equal gentleness does God deal with the penitent crushed under a sense of sin while yet 'a great way off,' *i. e.*, who is just beginning to repent: He listens to the first faint sighs of his heart, and the Holy Spirit completes the work which He Himself commenced (Is. xlii. 3; James iv. 8).

The Prodigal, though assured of reconciliation, yet makes his premeditated confession: from which we learn that the best repentance *follows* rather than precedes a sense of forgiveness; for the more the love of God is felt in the heart, so much the more grief will there be for having offended Him (Ezek. xvi. 60-63, xxxvi. 24-31).

The son's confession is interrupted by an order given by the father to exchange his rags for the best robe, to invest him with a ring, and to put shoes on his feet. All these expressions of the father show his desire to treat him not as a servant, but as a son (Gal. iv. 7: compare Gen. xli. 42; Esther viii. 2; 1 Macc. vi. 15). Thus the penitent will not be upbraided for his sins; which will never again be mentioned, but which will be cast as it were into the depths of the sea (Ezek. xxxiii. 16; Micah vii. 19).

The 'best robe' may either be taken to mean the imputed righteousness of Christ, or the personal holiness of the restored penitent. Compare the parable of the Marriage Feast (St. Matt. xxii.). The signet 'ring' may denote

the seal of the Spirit, the testimony that a man belongs to God (Eph. i. 13, 14; 2 Cor. i. 22). The 'shoes' may indicate the power of walking in the ways of God (Zech. x. 12; Deut. xxxiii. 25: compare Eph. vi. 15).

The Prodigal's return is the signal for festivity, music, and dancing; the father declaring to his household the grounds of the joy in which they are invited to share. These are—that the long-lost wanderer is the *son* of their indulgent master, and that till now he has been dead, as far as his father and the household are concerned (St. Luke xix. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 25). A state of sin is ever considered in Scripture as a state of death (Eph. ii. 1).

The account of the younger son's return is followed by a statement of the elder brother's conduct. The latter represents *primarily* the Pharisees, legally righteous, proud of their freedom from gross sins, and disposed to condemn their brethren without pity. In a *secondary* sense, the elder brother may represent the Jews murmuring at the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges with themselves (Acts xiii. 42-50, xxii. 21, 22; 1 Thess. ii. 14-16). In either case, we have a striking contrast between the compassionate love of God towards the penitent sinner and the narrow grudging heart of man towards his erring brother.

Not even when his father bore with him so far as to come out and entreat him, would the elder brother lay aside his displeasure; but he loudly complained of the unfairness with which he was treated, and of the bounty bestowed upon his brother, whom he would not condescend to own as such. He speaks of him with contempt—'this *thy son*,' and does not say 'this *my brother*.' He also magnifies his faults—'which hath devoured thy living with harlots.' This may have been true, but was not at least within his own knowledge, nor was the expression dictated by brotherly love and pity.

The goodness with which the father bore with the surly peevishness and selfishness of the elder brother, whom he still calls 'son,' notwithstanding his insolent speech, is little inferior to the mercy shown towards the younger. He points out to him that the kindness bestowed upon his brother did not lessen *his* claims—that he was still 'heir' and fellow possessor, if he chose, of all

the property of his father; that in his complaints he was falling into the very sin of his brother, in seeking to separate something from his father's stock before he could call it his own, instead of feeling that he possessed *all* with his father.

We here learn the nature of the rewards of Christ's kingdom: viz., that *all* is possessed by *each*. We see that mercy to the penitent is no just cause of complaint to the righteous in any case, since nothing is thereby taken away from them. We have here also a warning to subdue this propensity to jealousy, which cannot be otherwise than most displeasing to Him who rejoices over every soul which was lost and is found.

Nothing is said of the effect produced on the mind of the elder brother by the words of his father, perhaps to intimate to the Pharisees that as yet the 'Kingdom of God' was not closed against them, but that they too, as well as the Publicans, might enter into 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' In the case of the Jews, *as a nation*, we know that they sullenly refused to the very last to enter, and thus, by their contumacy, finally excluded themselves.

QUESTIONS.

What was our Saviour's design in this parable? Whose conduct does He here contrast? Show its relation to the two preceding parables. Describe, in the words of Scripture, the work of conversion. Under what character is God here represented? Is He described under this character in any other parable? In how many ways does God sustain the character of a *Father*? Distinguish these. In what way does God become the Father of Christians? How many interpretations have been given of the 'two sons'? Which is the primary interpretation? How is this shown? What request did the younger make? What is meant by the expression, 'that falleth to me'? What was the law among the Jews in regard to division of property? What was probably the young man's motive in making this request? How was this shown? What desire on the part of man is here signified? Give examples of this desire to be independent of God. Was the younger son's request granted? What may we learn from this, in regard to the nature of God's dealings with man? Quote passages to show that man's will is left perfectly

free? What is meant by 'gathering all together'? And what by the 'journeying into a far country'? Prove that a state of sin is a state far from God. Show that this was eminently the case with the Gentiles. What is meant by the 'mighty famine' which arose in the land? How does the prophet Jeremiah describe the unsatisfying nature of worldly enjoyments? What did the Prodigal do when in want? How are his distress and humiliation impressively represented? Why would this be particularly offensive to a Jew? What are the 'husks' here spoken of? What does all this misery of the Prodigal represent? Illustrate from Scripture the loathsomeness of a state of sin. Show that the pleasures of sin are deceitful. Show also that a life of vice is a life of slavery. How is the change in the Prodigal strikingly expressed? What does this indicate in regard to his *previous* state? In what similar terms are the sinner and his condition spoken of in Holy Scripture? How had the miseries of the Prodigal been beneficial to him? In what light, in like manner, may the miseries consequent upon sin be regarded? To what have we then a *reference* here? What is the *first* mark which shows this young man's repentance to be genuine? [Conviction of sin.—'I have sinned against *Heaven*, and before thee.'] What is the essence of sin? What is the *second* mark which is here given? [Confidence in his sonship—'Father.'] When is this relationship first established? Was it merited by anything on his part? Show that his disobedience did not deprive him of it. What is the *third* mark? [An open confession.] Show that this is a mark of true penitence. What is the *fourth* mark? [Humility.—'I am no more worthy.'] What is the *fifth* mark? [An immediate attempt at amendment—'I will arise, &c.,' and 'he arose, &c.'] How is the father's readiness to receive his penitent son shown? Of what is this anxiety on the father's part a representation? Although assured of reconciliation, what does the Prodigal nevertheless do? How does this illustrate the nature of true repentance? How did the father interrupt his son's confession? What was this investiture designed to show? Illustrate this from Scripture. What may the 'best robe' here represent? In what other parable have we the same figure used for a similar purpose? [The Marriage Feast.] What may the signet 'ring' denote? What power is indicated by 'the shoes'? Show that much luxury was often displayed in this article of dress. [Judith xvi. 9; Ezek. xvi. 10; Song of Sol. viii. 1.] Whom did the father invite to partake of his joy? Upon what grounds did he invite them? Prove from Scripture that a state of sin is a state of death. Prove that it is a lost state. What are these rejoicings intended to represent? Where was the

elder brother during this scene? Whom does the elder brother *primarily* represent? What was their *general* character? Show, however, that many of them were sincere. In a *secondary* sense, whom may the elder brother represent? Give examples of the murmuring of the Jews at the equal privileges of the Gentiles. In either sense, what contrast is brought out? How did the father bear with him? What complaint did the elder brother make? In what terms did he speak of his brother? How is the character of the father strikingly shown? What error does he show his elder son he was falling into? What may we here learn in regard to the nature of the rewards in Christ's Kingdom? What feeling is there here a warning against? Why is nothing said in regard to the effect produced on the mind of the elder brother? In the case of the Jews as a nation, what was the result? What comment does St. Paul give, as to legal righteousness? [Rom. iii. ; Gal. iii.]

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

St. Luke xvi. 1-14.

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant 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.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

NOTES.

THE design of our Saviour in the parable of 'The Unjust Steward' is to teach the right use of worldly possessions: viz., the dealing with them in such a way as to secure our happiness in that future state into which we shall presently be removed by death.

This parable was addressed not only to the Twelve, but to all who followed our Lord, and in the hearing of the Pharisees, as we see from the conclusion (ver. 14), when they, knowing that their own conduct was therein de-

lineated, and that the severity with which Christ reproved them was just, 'derided Him.'

The parable was, in all its leading features, familiar to the Jews, as may be seen in the following Hebrew simile:—'The world is like a house built; in which the heavens are the covering, the stars the candles, the fruits of the earth as a spread table, and the owner is God. Man is the steward of this house, into whose hands the Lord hath delivered all His riches. If he behave well, he will find favour; if he behave ill, the Lord will remove him from his stewardship.'

In the parable the rich man represents God, the universal Lord of all (Ps. xxiv. 1; Rev. iv. 11). He has distributed from His rich treasury, to some more, to others less, of temporal blessings; reserving, however, the *absolute property* in these to Himself; and therefore man, as His *Steward*, will be expected to render an exact account.

A 'steward' here signifies the chief ruler of the household, who had the management of the whole estate, received the rents, and was accountable for them to his master. Such was Eliezer in the house of Abraham (Gen. xxiv. 2-12), and Joseph in the house of Potiphar (Gen. xxxix. 4). Fidelity, therefore, was an essential qualification for such an office (1 Cor. iv. 2).

This Steward was accused of 'wasting his master's goods,' probably through prodigality and sinful extravagance. By this may be understood, that we and all mankind stand justly accused of having employed God's gifts to other uses than those for which they were intended; having made self-gratification the chief end of our lives, instead of seeking the glory of God and the good of our neighbours.

We are next told of the Master's calling the Steward to an account for the unfaithful management of his trust, and then dismissing him from his service. The Steward, by his silence, stands convicted of the charge brought against him; and his conscience ratifies or rather anticipates the sentence of condemnation passed upon him.

Next follow the perplexity and uneasiness of the Steward, and his confession of unfitness for labour, for which his past life has, so far, disqualified him, while, at the same time, his pride forbids him to beg. He therefore contrives

a plan for his future subsistence, which is more in accordance with worldly wisdom than with the principles of honesty and virtue. He calls together his master's debtors: either tenants, who paid their rent *in kind*, to whom he granted new leases, upon lower terms; or dealers, who contracted to supply the household with corn and oil, to whom he gave back their contracts, that they might fraudulently alter them. These alterations were intended to benefit them at his master's expense; and the arrangement seems to be one which, once completed, could not be broken; and thus he calculated on the gratitude of those whom he had thereby enriched.

The parable next informs us of the sentiments and opinion of the master, when he was informed of this ingenious, but criminal, device of his servant. 'The lord,' i.e. the master of this servant, not our blessed Lord, 'commended him because he had done *wisely*.'* The means which he employed were iniquitous, but they answered his purpose; and he is here brought forward to shame those who pursue a laudable aim, viz. securing happiness and heaven, with less persistency than he did his unworthy object, viz. the obtaining, through cunning and fraud, a precarious provision for this life.

The 'children of this world,' are those whose desires are bounded by this world, and who seek for nothing beyond (Ps. xvii. 14: compare St. Luke xvi. 25; St. Matt. vi. 2). The same term is only used on one other occasion in Scripture: viz. St. Luke xx. 34.

The 'children of light' are so denominated from the leading object of their affections: viz. 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness;' all other things being subordinated to this one main pursuit. The same term is used St. John xii. 36; Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 5.

The former are said to be 'wiser,' i.e. more prudent and skilful, 'in their generation,' i.e. in the conduct of their affairs for the attainment of their unworthy purposes. Not wiser in regard to the *object* of pursuit; but more sagacious in selecting the fittest means for attaining their

* Or *prudently*, the word *φρονίμως* signifying a skilful adaptation of means to an end, without affirming moral approbation or disapprobation either of means or end.

purpose, and more diligent and persevering in their application.

Next comes the moral of the parable, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, &c.' The word 'mammon' means 'whatever a person is apt to confide in;' and, because men put their trust generally in external advantages, such as riches, authority, honour, power, knowledge, the word is used to denote everything of that kind, and more especially *riches*, by way of eminence (Job xxxi. 24).

The word 'unrighteous' here signifies false, deceitful, uncertain; and riches are so called, not as being in themselves bad, but as being earthly and fleeting, betraying the reliance which is placed on them. We shall either soon leave them, or they will soon leave us (1 Tim. vi. 17; Prov. xxiii. 5).

With this unrighteous mammon we are to 'make friends:' viz., by acts of charity and mercy; by a wise and proper application of it to the promotion of God's glory and the good of mankind. This, we are assured, will be crowned with the highest honours and rewards in the heavenly kingdom (Rev. xiv. 13).

'When ye fail,' *i.e.* when you are dismissed or discharged from your stewardship by death, 'they may receive you,' &c. Our Saviour Himself gives the true explanation of these words, in St. Matt. xxv. 34-40. '*Everlasting habitations.*' The crafty device of the steward could only secure to him a *temporary* habitation, and a precarious subsistence; whereas the method here pointed out by the Saviour, of employing our worldly substance, cannot fail of securing a never-ending dwelling-place and 'pleasures for evermore' in the immediate presence of God.

'He that is faithful, &c.' Our Lord's disciples, being poor, might think that they had no concern in this parable: He therefore assures them that all, however poor, have some talents entrusted to them, in the use of which they may show fidelity; and that by so doing they may prove themselves worthy of having a greater trust committed to them.

'If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, &c.' Here the unrighteous mammon is contrasted with the 'true riches;' and the meaning is, that they who

abuse the uncertain and comparatively valueless riches of this world, cannot expect to be put in possession of the riches of Heaven.

'That which is *another's*, &c.' Our translation has the word 'man' wrongly introduced here; for it is not *man*, but *God*, who is intended, to whom the riches and other advantages in our possession properly belong. He has committed them to our trust as stewards only, to be laid out for the good of His family; and He may at any moment call us to give an account of our employment of them.

'That which is *your own*' does not mean that which is already our own, but that which is to be so—which shall be wholly in our power and perpetually in our possession, so that we need never dread being called to account for its management.

'No servant can serve, &c.' In this world we are in the condition of servants from whom two masters are claiming allegiance. The one is God, man's rightful Lord; the other is the world, under various forms: here represented as unrighteous mammon, which was given to be our servant, to be used in God's interest, and in itself to be considered by us as evanescent and belonging to another; but which has erected itself into a lord demanding obedience from us, which if we give we can no longer be accounted faithful servants and stewards of God (James iv. 4).

The wisest course is to devote all our energies to the service of the Lord as 'good stewards of the manifold grace of God' (1 Pet. iv. 10).

QUESTIONS.

What did our Saviour design to teach by this parable? To whom was it addressed? In whose hearing? At its conclusion, what did the Pharisees do? Why? Show that the details of the story were familiar to the Jews. Who is meant by the lord of the steward? To whose care has He entrusted temporal things? In doing this, what has He reserved to Himself? What relation, therefore, does man bear to God? What is a steward? Give examples from Scripture of this office. What is an essential qualification for such an office? Of what was this steward accused? What does this represent? What did his master do on hearing the charge? How is the justice of the accusation shown? What does the

period of dismissal represent? Is this day of retribution represented in any other parables? What event may each person regard as equivalent to this? Why? What was the steward's state of mind when he received notice of dismissal? What means of living did he first think of? What did he say of these? What sort of plan did he contrive? Explain his procedure. When once made, could the engagement be broken? Upon what feeling, then, did he calculate? When his master heard of it, what opinion did he express? What is here the meaning of the word 'wisely'? Did he commend him for doing 'rightly'? For what purpose is he here brought forward? Who are 'the children of the world'? Give examples. Who are 'the children of light'? Where else is the same expression to be found? In what sense are the former said to be 'wiser' than the latter? In what sense are they not wiser? What is the literal meaning of the word 'mammon'? In what are men most apt to confide? What does *unrighteous* mammon mean? Why is it so called? How are we to 'make friends' with this mammon? When will the proper use of these things be rewarded? What is meant by the expression 'when ye fail'? Explain from our Lord's own words, 'they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' With what are the *everlasting* habitations here contrasted? Has the parable any concern with the poor? What lesson does it teach *them*? With what is the unrighteous mammon contrasted? How ought the expression 'another man's' to have been translated? Why? What is the meaning of the words 'that which is your own'? As *stewards*, what is our condition in this world? Who are the two masters claiming our service? Show the incompatibility of the one service with the other.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

St. Luke xvi. 19-31.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day :

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime

receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house :

28 For I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

NOTES.

THE great truths which are presented to our notice in this parable are—the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, and the fearful consequences of living merely for this present world. For the illustration of these truths, two characters are brought before us in strong contrast ; and the contrast is sustained throughout the entire story, beginning in time and carried out into eternity.

The one had enjoyed a life of luxury, being clothed in splendid raiment and faring sumptuously *every day*. His *dress* consisted of articles of the most costly description, such as could only be procured by princes and the great ones of the earth. In the East a purple garment was con-

sidered a royal robe, or as a royal gift intended to confer the highest honour (Esther viii. 15; Dan. v. 7; 1 Macc. x. 20, xi. 58), and idols were sometimes clothed with it (Jer. x. 9).* Fine linen was also held in high esteem. It was chiefly produced from the flax that grew on the banks of the Nile (Prov. vii. 16; Is. xix. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 7), was peculiarly soft and white, and was so expensive that it could only be worn by princes, by priests, or by those who were very rich (Gen. xli. 42; 1 Chron. xv. 27; Exod. xxviii. 5). The purple was probably the outer robe, the fine linen the inner vest; the combination of which colours was highly prized (Rev. xviii. 12).

In the parable no censure is intended to be passed upon the rich man for the style of his dress or of his living, but for making these subservient only to the gratification of his sensual appetites, without the smallest consideration or feeling for the urgent necessities of his fellow-creatures.

The other person forms a striking contrast; his very name imports poverty and helplessness.† He was in such circumstances as to require to be laid by others at the rich man's gate; he was partially clad, full of sores, and so destitute of food as to desire with longing eyes the refuse from the rich man's table. (Compare Judges i. 7.) No one attended to him or bound up his wounds. The 'dogs licked his sores.' This expression does not appear to indicate any sympathy on the part of the dogs; but rather the entire abandonment of Lazarus on the part of man.‡

The contrast between rich and poor is, in this world, a matter of daily occurrence, and will always continue to be so, as we are assured by Holy Scripture (Deut. xv. 11; St. Matt. xxvi. 11).

Our Saviour gives a name, *Lazarus*, to the poor man, but confers no such distinction upon the rich man; intending thereby either to contrast the spiritual with the natural

* The purple dye of antiquity was obtained from a shell-fish which is now unknown, and was extremely costly on account of its rarity: a few drops only being obtained from each fish.

† Lazarus, 'a helpless person;' or Eleazer, 'help in God.'

‡ Both in the Old and New Testaments dogs bear a character exclusively evil, and are never associated with symbols of fidelity or even kindness (Ps. xxii. 16; Jer. xv. 3; St. Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2).

world,* or that He might not needlessly provoke the passions of His hearers, and thus render them incapable of deriving profit from His instructions.

We next find that death, the common lot of all mankind, overtook both; neither favouring the rich man by reason of his riches, nor overlooking the poor man in consequence of his poverty (Job xxi. 23-26). No mention is made of the *burial* of the poor man, probably because this took place without much mourning or lamentation. Although consigned, however, to some obscure grave, 'ministering spirits' (Heb. i. 14) were sent from Heaven to conduct his soul to the mansions of the blessed.

It is said the Jews had three ways of expressing the happiness of good men after death: viz. (1) the Garden of Eden or Paradise; (2) under the Throne of Glory; (3) Abraham's bosom (see St. Luke xxiii. 43; Rev. vi. 9). Our Saviour here uses the last, to signify the deep quietness of intimate communion, such as He Himself enjoyed with the Father (St. John i. 18); or perhaps in allusion to the ancient custom at feasts of placing the most favoured guest next the master, thus leaning on his breast (St. John xiii. 23; St. Matt. viii. 11; St. Luke xiii. 29).

Of the rich man it is said that he was 'buried,' probably to intimate that he had a splendid funeral amid much worldly pomp, which is the last great distinction between the rich and the poor (Ps. xlix. 16, 17; Eccles. v. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 7). All, however, was of no avail to procure happiness in a future state; accordingly we next find him 'lifting up his eyes in *hell*, being in torments,' *i. e.* in Hades, where the souls of all are reserved to the judgment of the Great Day.

Of this intermediate state little is said in Scripture. All that we can deduce from this and some other passages is, that (1) departed souls are assembled in one appointed place; (2) that they are separate from each other, according to their characters for good or evil, but still mutually conscious of each other's state; and (3) that a transition from the good to the evil, or the reverse, is impossible.†

* 'In the world the names and titles of the rich are known, and when they are talked of they are designated by such; but the names of the poor are either not known, or if known are not counted worthy of being particularly noted.'

† As Abraham's bosom is not heaven, though leading to it; so also Hades, where the rich man was, is not hell, although in his case it will lead to it (Rev. xx. 14).

We are next told that the rich man 'saw Abraham afar off.' This circumstance would excite the bitterest reflections in his mind on the loss of so much happiness, which he himself might have enjoyed, but which it was now impossible to recover (see Rev. xiv. 10). It is plain, also, from his recognition of Lazarus, that he must have been familiar with the beggar laid daily at his gate; and therefore it is a just retaliation that with the measure which he meted to Lazarus it should be measured to him again.

'He cried and said, Father Abraham,' &c. He still, like the Jews generally, clung to the hope that his descent from Abraham, his fleshly privileges, would profit him something (St. Matt. iii. 9; St. John viii. 33, 39): though this was the very circumstance which rendered his fall so great (St. Matt. xi. 23). He does not ask for entire relief from his sufferings, but only for a momentary respite. But even this was not now to be obtained.

'But Abraham said, Son, &c.' He does not deny the relationship, nor does he revile or insult him in his misery; for this is contrary to the nature of the blessed (St. Jude, 9). Two reasons are assigned for the denial of his request. He is reminded of the contrast of their situations in life. Like the Israelites of old, he had had his choice upon earth (Deut. xxx. 19). He had selected temporal enjoyments as *his* good things, *i. e.* what he esteemed the highest good; and now, after having indulged in these, it was vain to think of recalling his choice. See Ps. xvii. 14; St. Luke vi. 24, 25; St. Matt. vi. 2.

'And likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.' We must here assume that Lazarus had exercised faith, patience, and resignation to the will of God, though this is not directly stated; since, otherwise, his sufferings, however great, would have profited him nothing. External poverty must be accompanied by poverty of spirit (St. Matt. v. 3). So, also, if riches be accompanied by a constant sense of dependence upon God, and the exercise of the Christian graces of faith, humility, &c., they do not exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven; since Abraham himself, into whose bosom Lazarus was carried, had been 'very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold' (Gen. xiii. 2). Each condition of life has its *peculiar*

advantages and its *peculiar* dangers; hence the prayer of Agur (Prov. xxx. 7-9: compare Job xxix. 11, &c.).

Another cause for the denial of the rich man's request was, that, as he had no reason to expect it, either in justice or as a favour, so it was in itself impossible to be granted. 'Beside all this, &c.' We are here taught that the future state of retribution is eternal and unchangeable, both in regard to rewards and punishments (St. Matt. xxv. 34-41); that death fixes the doom of every one (Eccles. ix. 10, xi. 3: compare St. Luke xxiii. 43; Phil. i. 23). From this passage, our Church is fully justified in rejecting the doctrines of purgatory and invocation of saints, as a 'fond,' *i. e.* foolish, 'thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the Word of God' (XXII. Art. of Religion).

This parable also confutes the opinions of those who hold that the soul is insensible in the interval between death and judgment: since we here learn that the soul never loses its consciousness, but, on leaving the body, departs into a state of bliss or misery, according to its character; neither of which, however, will be complete till, at the Day of Judgment, the soul is reunited to its companion, and, together with it, either received into Heaven or cast down into hell.

Having failed in a request for himself, the tormented rich man ventures to intercede for his brethren; probably in dread of his own misery being increased through their presence. There was implied, however, in this request, a justification of himself, and reproach against God for not having given *him* sufficient evidence of the realities of the future state.

Abraham's answer is brief and stern, rebuking this evil thought in his heart—'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them:' *i. e.*, they have enough to keep them from that place of torment, if they will only use it. We are here taught that the Old Testament Scriptures reveal the doctrine of a future state, as Christ Himself showed upon another occasion (St. Matt. xxii. 31, 32: see also VII. Art. of Religion).

From the earnest renewal of the rich man's request, 'Nay, Father Abraham, &c.,' we learn that the contempt of God's Word, which he had manifested upon earth,

he carried with him into eternity; deeming that this alone would not suffice, that his brethren wanted something more—'But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.' At first sight we may be inclined to agree with the rich man, that seeing and conversing with a departed friend would be the best evidence that could be obtained or desired. We are assured, however, by Abraham's answer, and consequently by Christ Himself, who knew what was in man, that they who are unconvinced by the Scriptures will not be persuaded even by an apparition from the dead. Faith is an act of the will and the affections, no less than of the understanding; and, where there is a determined alienation of these, no impression made by a miracle would be more than transitory. Witness the effect of the miracles by Moses upon the Egyptians, or the vision of the Angel upon Balaam. The very thing desired by the rich man was, indeed, not long afterwards, vouchsafed to many by the resurrection of another Lazarus; yet the Jews remained, as before, in obstinate unbelief and impenitence (St. John xi. 45-53, xii. 10): thus proving the truth of our Saviour's words (St. John v. 46, 47).

This was also abundantly evidenced in the resurrection of Jesus Himself, to which, perhaps, the parable prophetically alludes (St. Matt. xxvii. 62-66, xxviii. 11-15). He, God's only begotten Son, the greatest person of the other world, came from the dead; and no reason can now be given why another man should be sent from thence, to tell what God's Son and His Apostles and Prophets have already declared.

We, Christians, have therefore no excuse for unbelief, or for continuing in sin. If what God has already done will not move us to repentance, neither will we be persuaded though additional miracles were wrought; though thousands should arise from their graves to reprove us, and exhort us to amendment of life.

QUESTIONS.

Is this a parable or a narrative? What is the difference between the two? In either case, what are the great truths taught? In illustration of this, what contrast is presented to us? Describe the life of the rich man. In what estimation

was the purple garment held? Give examples from Scripture. Was it ever applied to religious uses? Whence was the purple dye obtained? In what estimation was fine linen held? In what did its beauty consist? Where was it chiefly produced? By whom alone was it worn? Why? Show that the combination of colours here mentioned was highly valued. Is it the style of the rich man's dress and living which is here intended to be censured? In what does his fault principally consist? Describe the other person mentioned. What does the name *Lazarus* signify? What is indicated by the fact of the dogs licking his sores? In what way are dogs always spoken of in Scripture? Give examples. Is the contrast here presented of common or uncommon occurrence in the world? Prove that this will always be the case. Why does our Saviour give a name to the poor man and not to the rich? What befel both of them? Why is the burial of the rich man mentioned? Why is that of the poor man not mentioned? Whither was the soul of Lazarus conveyed? How are angels connected with human affairs? How did the Jews express the happiness of the blessed? What is meant by the expression 'Abraham's bosom'? To what custom may there here be an allusion? What kind of funeral is it likely the rich man had? Show that this is the last great distinction in this world between rich and poor. What became of the rich man's soul? What does the word 'hell' here signify? What do we know from Scripture of this intermediate state? In what will each condition—viz. 'Abraham's bosom' and 'hell' or Hades—terminate? What did the rich man see? What did this excite in his mind? What does his recognition of Lazarus show? What just retaliation is there here? What is expressed in the term '*Father Abraham*'? Show that this was common among the Jews. What effect would this rich man's descent from Abraham have on his condition? Illustrate this. What request does he make? How did Abraham answer him? How many reasons does he give for refusing the request? What is the *first*? What is meant by '*thy good things*'? What must we assume the character of Lazarus to have been? What kind of poverty alone is certain of Heaven? Prove that riches do not necessarily exclude from Heaven. What are the peculiar dangers of each condition of life? How might the rich man have employed his riches and influence? What is the *second* reason which Abraham gives for his refusal? What are we here taught of the future state? Give illustrations from Scripture? What Romish errors are here condemned? What does the Twenty-second Article of Religion say of these? What other opinion is refuted

by this parable? Failing in his first request, what did the rich man next ask? What may have been his motive? What accusation against God is implied in this request? What was Abraham's answer? What doctrine are we here taught may be learned from the Old Testament? On what other occasion did our Saviour show this? What feeling towards God is indicated by the rich man's answer? What did he imagine would prove more efficacious? What do we learn from Abraham's answer? What is faith? Give examples to show that the effect even of miracles upon the mind may be but transitory. [Those of Moses in Egypt and those in Balaam's case.] Show that even the very thing desired by the rich man proved ineffectual. What effect would most likely be produced by an apparition? To whose resurrection may the parable prophetically allude? What additional evidence have Christians, besides Moses and the prophets?

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW.

St. Luke xviii. 1-8.

1 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

NOTES.



THIS parable has its moral prefixed, and is evidently intended as an illustration and enforcement of the preceding discourse, in which our Saviour had been describing the sufferings and distresses of the last times, previous to the revelation of the Son of Man, when even the disciples should 'desire to

see one of the days of the Son of Man and should not see it' (chap. xvii. 22).

There is no Christian duty which is more frequently recommended and urged by the Saviour than prayer; nor is there any duty to which so many promises are annexed to incite us to its diligent performance (Ps. l. 15; St. John xvi. 23, 24; 1 John v. 14).

To show the different qualifications and dispositions of mind which are required in order to make our prayers acceptable, our Lord makes use of different similitudes. Thus, to show the necessity of a simple *dependence* and full *confidence* in our Heavenly Father, He makes use of the similitude of a child asking food of its parent (St. Matt. vii. 9); to show the necessity of *forgiveness* of injuries in prayer, He makes use of the similitude of a gracious master and an unmerciful servant (St. Matt. xviii.); to show the necessity of *humility*, He makes use of the example of a self-righteous Pharisee and a despised publican (St. Luke xviii.); and, in the present parable, He shows the necessity of *perseverance* and *importunity* in prayer.

There is a very similar parable to this in St. Luke xi. 5-8, in which a person is represented as receiving on account of his *importunity* what was refused to the claims of *friendship*.

In the command to *pray always*—given here and also in Eph. vi. 18; 1 Thess. v. 17—there is no requirement implied which may not be fulfilled, if we consider the true nature of prayer, viz., that it is 'the desire of the heart;' just as the widow in the parable, even when absent from the judge, must have had her mind occupied with her suit, ready to break out into petition whenever she should see him. The command is not to be understood of an uninterrupted outward devotion, which is impossible and incompatible with the proper discharge of the duties of our station. Compare St. John xviii. 20; St. Luke ii. 37, 38, where the sense evidently is constancy and regularity at the appointed hours of prayer. And thus the regular daily sacrifices are called by a still stronger expression—'a continual burnt offering' (Exod. xxix. 42).

'Not to faint' in the original, means not 'to yield to evils, and despond under them;' not to be wholly wearied out by them, so as to cease from prayer as being unavail-

ing to procure relief. It is a word frequently used by St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 1, 8, 16; Eph. iii. 13; Heb. xii. 3). The disciple of Christ must expect suffering and persecution, so that abundant scope is given for the exercise of patience and perseverance. The two duties of prayer and patience are thus united by the Apostle, Rom. xii. 12.

As our Saviour did not scruple to propose for our imitation the *prudence of a dishonest steward*, and as on another occasion He compares God to a *churlish neighbour*, so on this occasion we find Him compared to an *unrighteous judge*. And the greater the difference in reality between the character of God and that of this judge, so much the more encouragement does the parable contain—so much greater is the argument for persevering prayer.

The character of the judge is drawn in the strongest expressions of regardlessness. He was wanting in the most powerful principle of virtuous conduct, viz. 'a sense of the supreme authority and the continual presence of God'—'the fear of God,' which, as Solomon says, 'is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov. ix. 10). He was also wanting in what is sometimes a poor and miserable substitute for 'the fear of God,' viz. respect for the opinion of the world. Thus the poor widow had little to hope from him: he had no motive of piety, or of benevolence and humanity, or even of respect for the world's opinion, to urge him to do justice and relieve the oppressed.

The character and conduct of a just judge are given in the following passages:—Exod. xviii. 21, 22, xxiii. 6-8; Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 16, 17. The judge in this parable was the reverse of all this, and was equally regardless of conscience and honour. Such a character as his is delineated in Is. i. 23; Eccles. iii. 16.

We next find the case of a poor widow described, who was obliged to apply to the judge for protection from some powerful adversary, who had probably defrauded her of the small property upon which she depended for support. In the East the state of widowhood is much more desolate and liable to oppression and wrong than with us; hence the numerous warnings and denunciations against this sin in Holy Scripture (Exod. xxii. 22-24; Deut. xxiv. 17, xxvii. 19; Jer. xxi. 12; Mal. iii. 5). God Himself, from whom all earthly powers derive their authority,

proposes His own example for our imitation (Psalm lxviii. 5).

The widow represents the Church under persecution (Is. liv. 1); or any individual member of the Church in conflict with the devil, the world, and the flesh, enemies which, in this parable, are represented by the 'adversary.' The cry of the widow, 'Avenge me of mine adversary,' *i.e.* 'let me have justice,' or 'deliver me from the oppression of mine adversary,' is the same that God's people daily put up, 'deliver us from evil,' *i.e.* the Evil One—the source and centre of *all* evil.

We are next told of the difficulty and discouragement she met with from the conduct of the judge—'He would not for a while.' Although conscious of the justice of her cause, he would afford her no redress, and turned a deaf ear to all her supplications. In like manner, God often *seems to man* to be acting as this unjust judge did—to be turning a deaf ear to the prayers of His people; and they are apt to be impatient under affliction and trial, expecting a much speedier deliverance than what He is willing to grant. They are tempted to think that God does not concern Himself with their affairs; and either to cry out with the disciples in the storm, 'Carest Thou not that we perish?' or to cease from prayer altogether, as being in their opinion an unavailing ceremony.

The parable next relates that the widow, through perseverance and importunity, succeeded in prevailing upon this unjust judge to take up her case. As is common with selfish people when talking of anything which interferes with their own ease and enjoyment, he speaks of her as 'wearying him.'* He is not stirred to do her justice by any stronger motive than a selfish regard for his own ease. He avenges her, in order that he may not be plagued by her solicitations any more. Something of a similar motive appears in our Saviour's disciples, in the case of the woman of Canaan (St. Matt. xv. 23). This parable and that miracle form an interesting parallel.

Our Saviour next *applies* the parable in the question,

* The word in the original, *ὑπωπιάζει* means literally 'to strike under the eye,' to render black and blue: hence, metaphorically, 'to mortify' (1 Cor. ix. 27); and here, 'to tease or weary by continual importunity.' Compare our English word 'plague,' which is literally 'to lash or strike.'

'Shall not God avenge His own elect?' &c. This contrast of the two cases is intended for our encouragement. If an *unjust* judge could be prevailed upon to act with justice, how much more the Lord, the *righteous* Judge (2 Tim. iv. 8; Gen. xviii. 25). There is another point of contrast between the widow and God's people. She was *friendless* and a *stranger* to the judge; they are God's elect, His own *beloved children*, having an all-powerful *advocate*, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John ii. 1).

Our Saviour does not merely put the question as one carrying conviction to the mind of the hearer, but answers it Himself in the strongest manner—'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.' Though God may appear slack in avenging His people, 'as some men count slackness' (2 Pet. iii. 9), yet He will not leave them a moment longer in the furnace of affliction and trial than is really needful for their welfare; He will deliver them when 'patience has had its perfect work' (St. James i. 3, 4; see Ecclus. xxxv. 17-19). A practical illustration of these words may be found in our Lord's conduct towards the family of Bethany before He brought them aid (St. John xi.); as also in His delaying to come to His tempest-tossed disciples till the fourth watch of the night (St. Matt. xiv. 24, 25).

The concluding words, 'Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh,' &c., seem to intimate that in the last days, spoken of in the preceding chapter, the trials would be so severe that 'the love of many should wax cold' (St. Matt. xxiv. 12), and the Church be reduced to a small band; and that the faith even of these would almost fail. The second coming of the Son of Man will be preceded by an almost universal apostasy, or, in other words, the number of the elect, in comparison with that of their contemporaries, will, as in the days of Noah and Lot, be small; and even this small number will require special divine support to render them victorious. Therefore our Saviour says, in another place, that those days shall be shortened, lest the faith of the elect also fail (St. Matt. xxiv. 22).

QUESTIONS.

What is prefixed to this parable? What is the parable intended to illustrate and enforce? What had our Saviour

been describing? What duty is most frequently inculcated upon us in Scripture? What encouragements have we to its performance? How does our Saviour show the dispositions of mind which are necessary to acceptable prayer? What similitude does He use, to teach *confidence* in prayer? What to teach us *forgiveness of injuries*? What to teach *humility*? What to teach *perseverance* and *importunity*? Is there any similar parable to the present? Quote from Scripture any passages in which we are commanded to pray *always*. Is this command to be *literally* understood? Show that its fulfilment is not impossible. Illustrate the meaning of the command by other passages. What expression of a similar kind is used with reference to the daily sacrifice? What is the meaning of 'not to faint'? From whom did St. Luke probably borrow the word? Quote passages to show St. Paul's use of it. [2 Cor. iv. 1; Gal. vi. 9.] What Christian graces are exercised under persecution? What duty does St. Paul join with patience and perseverance? Are the similitudes used by our Saviour always applicable in *every point*? Whose example does He commend for our imitation, as teaching *forethought* or *prudence*? To what does He compare God, upon another occasion? To what is the contrast between this and God's *real* character an encouragement? Describe the character of the judge in the parable. What is the most powerful principle of virtuous conduct? What does Solomon say of this? What is often used as a substitute for this? As both of these were wanting in this judge, was any motive likely to move him in the case of the widow? How does Scripture describe the character of a just judge? Quote passages which describe such judges as the one in the parable. Who applied to this judge? For what did she apply? To what, in Eastern countries, is widowhood exposed? Quote from Scripture denunciations against this sin. Whose example does God propose to earthly powers for their imitation? Whom may the widow represent? Who may be represented by the adversary? What is meant by the expression 'avenge me'? What similar petition do God's people daily put up? At first, how did the judge act? What does this conduct represent? What are God's people tempted to do, in consequence of His seeming unconcern? How did this widow at length succeed? What motive on the part of the judge induced him to do her justice? What does the word 'weary' literally mean? What other meanings are derived from this? Does the same motive ever appear in any of our Lord's disciples? [St. Matt. xv. 23.] How does the account of that miracle illustrate this parable? How does our Saviour apply the parable? How many points of contrast are there between this widow's case and

that of God's people? What is the *first* point of contrast? What is the *second*? In what way does our Saviour put His question? What does He do in addition to this? *When* will God avenge His people? Illustrate this manner of acting by our Lord's own conduct. What do the concluding words indicate with respect to the trials and persecutions mentioned in the last chapter? What effect will these have on mankind? What on the elect? What will God do then to preserve His elect from falling away? What former days will these resemble? How?

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

St. Luke xviii. 9-14.

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

NOTES.

IN the parable of 'The Importunate Widow' we are taught that the prayer which will be heard must be *incessant*: in the present, that it must be offered in a *right spirit*. Our Saviour teaches this truth, in a most impressive manner, by describing the devotions of two worshippers: the representatives of two classes, which are to be found in every age.

From the moral which is prefixed to the parable we learn that our Lord's design was to correct a fault, which might be latent in the breasts of some even of His own disciples: viz. spiritual pride or self-exaltation, which is invariably accompanied by a certain degree of contempt for others. At the same time, it was chiefly intended as a censure on the pride and uncharitableness of the Pharisees, many of whom were present.

'The Temple' (τὸ ἱερόν) was a collection of sacred buildings of large extent, covering the whole summit of Mount Moriah, except the small but high rock on which the castle of Antonia was built. On the same site Solomon had built the first Temple, which stood 416 years; having been completed B.C. 1004, and destroyed by the Chaldeans B.C. 588. The Temple of our Saviour's time (called the *second* Temple) was built under the direction of Zerubbabel B.C. 535, and restored by Herod B.C. 16. It was far inferior to the former in architectural splendour (Ezra iii. 12), besides being deficient in some remarkable things which the other had possessed: viz. the Ark of the Covenant, the Shechinah, the Urim and Thummim, and the Holy Fire.

The outermost part of the temple was the Court of the Gentiles, in which 'proselytes of the gate' might worship. These proselytes are supposed to be the same as those who, in the New Testament, are called 'devout men,'—'men who fear God' (Acts x. 2, xiii. 16).

Within this was an inner court, separated from the Court of the Gentiles by a low wall three cubits high, having at regular intervals pillars bearing inscriptions in Greek and Latin, forbidding any stranger to appear within it, on pain of death (Acts xxi. 28, &c.). This wall is alluded to by St. Paul, Eph. ii. 14.

This second court—the Court of the Israelites—was divided into two parts; the lower was called 'the Court of the Women,' from which there was an ascent of fifteen steps to 'the Court of the Men.' This was the court in which all Israelites and proselytes of righteousness worshipped (St. Luke i. 10).

A portion of the above was separated from the rest, B.C. 106, by a railing one cubit high, and called 'the Court of the Priests.' It contained the altar of burnt offering, and a large basin to supply the place of the brazen sea (2 Chron. iv. 2).

From this court a flight of twelve steps ascended to the Temple properly so called (ναός), which consisted of three parts: viz. (1) the porch, a square of twenty cubits, entered by a rich vail, containing valuable ornaments and presents from kings and princes (St. Luke xxi. 5); (2) the Holy Place, forty cubits long and twenty broad, containing the

Golden Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense; (3) beyond this, and separated from it by two vails, at a cubit's distance from each other, was the Holy of Holies, a square of twenty cubits, which was entered by the High Priest alone, and by him only once a year.

The fixed hours of devotion in the temple service were the *third* and the *ninth*, which were strictly observed by the Jews wherever they happened to be (Acts ii. 15, iii. 1, x. 3). The more devout Jews added to these the *sixth* hour (Acts x. 9; Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10).

'The Pharisees' took their name from the Hebrew word 'pharash,' signifying 'separated,' 'set apart;' because they kept themselves aloof from the people, affecting a superior sanctity. The precise period when this sect took its rise cannot be ascertained; but Josephus tells us that they were considerable in number and influence B.C. 108. Their distinguishing characteristic was a zealous adherence to the traditions of the elders, which they placed, if not on a higher, at least upon an equal footing with the Law itself. They held the immortality of the soul, the existence of angels and spirits, and the resurrection of the body (Acts xxiii. 8). There was on the part of the Pharisees a recognition of the *glory* of the Jewish calling and of God's favour to them. It is true, as we have seen, that they too often perverted this feeling to selfish and vainglorious purposes; but the feeling itself was good and right, and capable of being turned to noble uses. Thus we read of certain Pharisees who were good men, *e. g.* Nicodemus, Gamaliel, Joseph of Arimathea, St. Paul; the last even made his boast of this (Acts xxiii. 6). Of the Sadducees, on the other hand, nothing good is said throughout the whole New Testament. It ought also to be noted that the Apostles received at times some countenance from the Pharisees, whereas, in the Acts of the Apostles the Sadducees are always spoken of as their bitter enemies.

'The Publicans' (properly so called) were Roman knights of the highest rank, who chiefly lived at Rome, and farmed the taxes of conquered provinces, paying a stipulated sum to the government, and exacting as much as possible from the people, in order to repay themselves, and be requited for their trouble. The Publicans mentioned in the Gospels were mere hirelings, who collected the taxes for their employers, the Publicani, at Rome.

Their proper designation was *Portitores*, because they stationed themselves at gates (*portæ*) and seaports to exact the customs from those who entered. These were much hated by the Jews, being considered traitors, in taking taxes of their own countrymen on behalf of the conquering nation.

The Pharisee 'stood' and prayed, which was an attitude frequently used by the Jews in their devotions (St. Matt. vi. 5; St. Mark xi. 25), although kneeling was the more common posture. In the early Christian Church, the faithful on the Lord's day stood at prayer, to commemorate Christ's resurrection on that day, through which they who by sin had fallen were again lifted up and set upon their feet (compare Ps. xl. 2). The same attitude was also used every day in the joyful season between Easter and Whit-Sunday.

The Pharisee prayed 'with himself:' *i. e.*, these were his secret thoughts, whatever his words may have been. Or it may mean 'by himself apart from the Publican,' as fearing pollution from his touch (St. Luke vii. 39); thus he would realise the prophet's description, Is. lxxv. 5.

He begins by a specious form of thanksgiving to God, on account of his own extraordinary merit; but this is evidently a mere compliment, for to himself alone does he ascribe all the praise of his boasted excellence. The language of true piety is ever conjoined with humility; such, for example, as that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 10.

Again, the righteousness of which he boasts is only *negative*: he is proud of himself because he is not guilty of these grosser crimes of which all the respectable portion of mankind would be ashamed. It is probable too that this was only *external* (see our Lord's description of the Pharisees, St. Matt. xxiii.). Nor is he satisfied with his own fancied goodness without insulting others; pointing with the finger of pride, in cruel contempt, to the poor penitent who is earnestly pleading for pardon.

Again, he boasts of his good deeds, of his works of supererogation, so making God his debtor. Only *one* fast was of Divine appointment, viz. the fast of Expiation (Lev. xvi. 29; Num. xxix. 7), called *the* fast (Acts xxvii. 9), which was kept on the tenth day of the seventh month. Other fasts, not of Divine appointment, are, however,

recognised in Scripture, Zech. viii. 19; to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (Jer. lii. 6-7); the burning of the Temple and City (2 Kings xxv. 8); the murder of Gedaliah (ver. 25); and the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. lii. 4; 2 Kings xxv. 1).* Besides these, the more religious Jews, and especially the Pharisees, kept two weekly fasts, on the second and the fifth days of the week. On these this Pharisee prides himself, forgetting that outward services are only helps to religion, not religion itself; that if, by fasting, corrupt lusts be not mortified, and virtues gained and strengthened, it degenerates into a mere act of superstition, or, as St. Paul terms it, a 'bodily exercise' (1 Tim. iv. 7-9).

In regard to 'tithes,' the other matter on which he prided himself, the law only commanded to tithe the fruit of the field and the produce of the cattle (Num. xviii. 21; Deut. xiv. 22; Lev. xxvii. 30). *He* tithed *all* that he possessed, down to the merest trifles (St. Matt. xxiii. 23); and turned a law which was intended to make the Jews feel themselves debtors to God's goodness, into an occasion of self-exaltation and pride (see God's opinion concerning the substitution of ceremonial observances in the place of inward piety and the duties of morality, Hos. vi. 6; Is. i. 11-18; Mic. vi. 6-8; Is. lviii. 1-7).

This religious act of the Pharisee cannot be called *prayer*; for it neither contains acknowledgment of sin, deprecation of punishment, nor supplication for benefits (compare Rev. iii. 17).

The *Publican* 'stood afar off,' in reverent awe, not presuming to press nearer to the Holy place, the symbol of the dwelling of the Holy One; with 'downcast eyes,' the natural expression of shame and humiliation (St. Luke xv. 18; Ezra ix. 6), and 'smiting upon his breast,' as an outward sign of inward grief or self-accusation (St. Luke xxiii. 48). It is thus that he acknowledges his own unworthiness, and pleads for pardon. Unlike the Pharisee, he confines his whole attention to his own condition; neither accusing any one besides himself, nor alleging anything on his own behalf, to extenuate, far less to vindicate, his past

* These four events are mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 1, 3, 8, 25.

offences (see the similar prayers of Job and David, Job xl. 4; Ps. xxv. 11, li. 4). The word, also, in which he begs for mercy (*ἰλάσθητι*) seems to express his hope of obtaining it by means of a propitiatory sacrifice. His words are, literally, 'God be propitious to me, *the* sinner!' The article and the verb together seem to imply that a propitiatory sacrifice was being offered on his especial behalf in the temple.

Our Saviour adds, that this despised man, who thus humbled himself to the dust before God, left the temple 'justified' or accepted 'rather than,' *i. e. and not* 'the other,' the arrogant and conceited Pharisee; for, having justified himself, he asked for no justification from God, and therefore he received none (St. Luke xvi. 15; see also 1 Sam. xvi. 7).

Our Saviour concludes with an assurance that this preference is in perfect agreement with an invariable principle or maxim of the Divine administration,—'For every one that exalteth himself,' &c. This maxim is repeated by our Lord on several occasions (St. Matt. xxiii. 12; St. Luke xiv. 11); and the same important truth runs throughout Scripture (Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Is. lvii. 15; St. Luke i. 52; St. James iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6).

QUESTIONS.

What is the difference between the lesson taught in the parable of 'The Importunate Widow' and that which is taught in this parable? How does Christ teach this? Of whom are these two worshippers the representatives? What fault was the parable designed to cure in those who followed Christ? What was the temple? How many temples were there? Who built the first? When? What became of it? How long did it stand? Under whose direction was the second built? When? By whom was it restored? In what respect was the second temple inferior to the first? What remarkable things were wanting in the second temple? What was the outermost court of the temple called? Who might worship there? What are these proselytes called in Scripture? What business was transacted in this court? By what was the court surrounded? For what purpose was it used? What court was within the Court of the Gentiles? How was it separated? Into how many parts was the Court of the Israelites divided? What was the outer part called? What

was in the Court of the Women? How was the Court of the Men reached from that of the Women? What court came afterwards, separated from the Court of the Israelites? What did it contain? What was within these courts? Into how many parts was it divided? Describe the Holy Place. What did it contain? [Golden Candlestick, Table of Shewbread, and Altar of Incense.] Describe the Holy of Holies. What did it contain? Who alone was permitted to enter it? What were the fixed hours of devotion among the Jews? What additional hour did the more devout among them also use? From what did the Pharisees take their name? Is the date of their origin accurately known? When were they a sect of considerable importance? What was their distinguishing characteristic? What doctrines did they hold? What other opinion did many of them entertain? In what estimation was this sect held? Mention any good men who came from this sect. In what posture did this Pharisee perform his devotion? What was the common posture? What was the practice of the early Christians in this respect? Why? What is meant by the expression 'prayed *with himself*'? How did this Pharisee realise the prophet's words? How does he begin his so-called prayer? Had he really a feeling of gratitude to God? Whose language, in this respect, is a striking contrast? What sort of righteousness does the Pharisee boast of? How does our Lord describe the Pharisees? How does this Pharisee treat his fellow-worshipper? Of what good deeds does he boast? In what light does he evidently view them? How many fasts were there of Divine appointment? What other fasts, of *human* appointment, are mentioned in Scripture? What did the fast of the *fourth* month commemorate? What did the fast of the *fifth* month? What did the fast of the *seventh* month? What did the fast of the *tenth* month? In what portion of Scripture are all these mentioned? What *weekly* fasts did the more religious Jews keep, in addition to these? In priding himself upon these fasts, what did this Pharisee forget? If the object of fasting be not obtained, into what does it degenerate? What is the second thing he prides himself upon doing? What was the law of 'tithes'? What was the practice of the Pharisees in this respect? What feelings was the law of tithes intended to call forth? Of what did the Pharisees turn it into an occasion? Quote from Scripture any texts that show God's condemnation of ritual observances *as a substitute* for inward piety. Give a definition of prayer. Show that this religious act of the Pharisee was not prayer. What early Christian Church resembled this Pharisee? How many classes of publicans were there? What, respectively, were they called? In what estimation were they

held? Of which class are the Publicans of the New Testament? In what manner did the Publican here mentioned perform his devotions? What feelings are expressed by downcast eyes? What does smiting upon the breast indicate? What is the Publican's prayer? Quote similar prayers from Scripture. What doctrine is implied in the word in which he begs for mercy? To whom does it point? What was the condition of each of these two worshippers on leaving the temple? What is meant by the words 'rather than'? Why did not God justify the Pharisee? With what maxims of the Divine government does our Saviour conclude? Quote other occasions on which He used the same words. Prove the same maxims from other parts of Scripture.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

St. Matt. xxv. 1-13.

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

3 They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the

wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so* ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

NOTES.



THIS parable is found only in St. Matthew's Gospel ; and, as it follows a discourse of our Saviour's concerning His future coming, it is evidently designed to illustrate and enforce the instructions therein contained.

'Then shall'—*i. e.* at that great day when everlasting life or everlasting death shall be adjudged to an assembled

world—'the Kingdom of Heaven,' *i. e.* the visible Church of Christ, 'be likened unto Ten Virgins.' The second coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself is often represented under the similitude of a marriage (Eph. v. 25-27; Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 9, 10).

In order fully to understand this parable, we must remember that it contains allusions to the marriage customs of the people of the East. The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, who are called in Scripture 'the children of the bridechamber,' and 'the friends of the bridegroom' (St. Matt. ix. 15; St. John iii. 29), goes to the house of the bride, and conducts her with much rejoicing and pomp to his own residence (1 Macc. ix. 37-39). She is accompanied from her father's house by her youthful friends and companions (Ps. xlv. 15), and, in order that she may be received properly, the bridegroom's younger female friends are accustomed to wait with lamps till news of the procession is heard, when they at once issue forth to welcome the bride to her new home. For this attention they are invited as guests to the marriage ceremony, and share in the festivities usual on such occasions.

By the 'Ten Virgins' we may understand the whole body of professing Christians, who assume that name as an outward sign of their religion, and who publicly avow their belief and expectation of Christ's second coming. The Church is often represented in Scripture as a virgin, to denote its purity and holiness (Lam. ii. 13; 2 Cor. xi. 2).

Marriages in the East were anciently, as they still are, celebrated at night; hence the numerous allusions in Scripture to *lights* in connection with a marriage (Ps. xix. 5; St. Matt. xxii. 13).

These virgins all 'took their lamps,'—*i. e.* a public profession of Christianity, with the outward use of all the appointed means of grace.

Five of the virgins were 'wise' or prudent, and five were 'foolish' or thoughtless. There is no significance in the *equality* of the numbers; they only intimate the fact that some were of one description of character and some of another. There is, and ever will be, an admixture of good and bad in the Church until the great day of separation comes (see parables of 'The Tares,' 'The Net,' &c., and St. Matt. vii. 25-27).

The folly of the one class was shown in taking an *insufficient* supply of oil: *i. e.*, in neglecting opportunities of furnishing themselves with all these Divine graces of the Holy Ghost which are exemplified in a life of holiness.

The 'wise' virgins, *i. e.* true Christians, carry out their profession in the uniform practice of all the Christian virtues. Their profession is here appropriately compared to a lamp well provided with oil, burning with a pure flame, and consequently of the greatest usefulness. Hence, our Saviour, employing the same figure, exhorts His disciples to 'let their light so shine,' &c. (St. Matt. v. 16); and so also the Apostle Paul (Phil. ii. 15).

The two classes of 'wise' and 'foolish' are also described by St. Peter: the former, 2 Pet. i. 5-8; and the latter in ver. 9.

The author of all Christian graces is the Holy Spirit, of whom, in Scripture, oil is an emblem. Hence Christ, Messiah, is so called because *anointed* with the Holy Ghost and with power (Acts x. 38). The same figure is used with reference to Christians, 1 John ii. 20-27: see also Exod. xxx. 22-33; Heb. i. 9. Whatever is merely *outward* in the Christian profession is the *lamp*; whatever is *inward* and spiritual is the *oil*.

The common fault, both of the wise and foolish virgins, was that 'they *all* slumbered and slept.' This teaches a most important lesson: *viz.*, that the very best Christians are not always on their guard against the temptations of the world; nor watchful, with their lights burning, for that hour when their Lord will arrive, when death and judgment will overtake them. Hence the necessary caution which our Lord gave to His disciples, St. Matt. xxvi. 41; Rev. iii. 2: see also Rom. xiii. 11, 12.

'At midnight there was a cry made, &c.' The suddenness of Christ's coming is here represented, and the alarm consequent upon it. The same thing was indicated in the preceding chapter, ver. 29, 30, 31 (see also 1 Thess. iv. 16, v. 2). The Jews have a tradition that the Messiah's coming will be sudden, at midnight, as their forefathers came out of Egypt (Exod. xii. 29); from which arose the practice in the Early Church of not dismissing the people on Easter Eve till after midnight. They waited thus, that they might be found ready if the Lord should come, who

was twice to glorify that night; first, by in it conquering death, and, second, by in it clothing His people in the power of His risen life.

The midnight cry had the effect of awakening all the sleepers, and both wise and foolish endeavoured to put themselves into the best order for accompanying the bridegroom into the marriage-chamber, and sharing in the honours of that important occasion.

By this is intimated that, at the last, every one, however indifferent now, will seriously examine into the foundation of his hope; will seriously inquire whether his life has been one which will have praise of God, and not merely that of men, which will avail nothing at the Judgment Day.

Now it is that the foolish perceive their folly, and the distress to which it has reduced them. Their lamps are 'expiring:' and when, in their extremity, they apply to the wise, they meet with a refusal, on the ground that the supply is not sufficient for both parties. Here we learn that an outward profession of religion which is not accompanied by a holy life and conversation will be of no avail in the great Day of Judgment.*

The wise virgins did all they could for their companions. They gave them the best counsel that, under the circumstances, was possible: viz., not to trust in man, but to betake themselves—it might not yet be too late—to the only Source from which divine grace can be obtained (Is. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18).

'While they went to buy, &c.' We here learn the folly and danger of deferring our preparation till the last stage of life; that, though God is long-suffering and patient, yet there are bounds to His forbearance, which may be taxed too far (see St. Luke xiii. 6; Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9).

'The door was shut,' both for the security and joy of those within and for the lasting exclusion of those without (compare Gen. vii. 16; Rev. iii. 12). By this expression

* The answer of the wise virgins to the foolish also condemns by implication the doctrine of *supererogation* taught by the Church of Rome; as if good men could not only purchase for themselves an admission into heaven by their merits, but could also secure the same favour for others who pursue their sinful courses to the end of their lives. See, on this subject, St. Luke xvii. 10; also, XIV. Art. of Religion.

is clearly signified the unalterable condition of good and bad men in a future state (see also St. Luke xvi. 26; Rev. xxii. 11; St. Matt. xxv. 46).

'Afterwards came also the other virgins, &c.' By the title 'lord,' which they give to the bridegroom, they claim to stand in a near relation to him; and the repetition of the title shows their earnest and anxious fear lest they should be rejected, as was indeed the case. The same image of the excluded seeking in vain an entrance is contained in St. Luke xiii. 24, &c., where a master, having appointed a set time in the evening for the return of his servants, rises up when that time has arrived, and shuts the door; and those of the household who have lingered and arrived later cannot persuade him to reopen it. They remain without, and he declares that the fellowship between them and him has never been more than merely an outward one, which is now completely severed. Our Lord Himself, in His Sermon on the Mount, interprets both these passages in plain and explicit language (St. Matt. vii. 21-23: see also Prov. i. 24-27).

Lest this should be our lot, the Saviour says to us—for what He said to His hearers then He says to every individual member of His Church in all ages—'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour,' &c. *When* Christ will come, we know not; but we have an assurance of the certainty that he *will* come (Heb. x. 37). This being so, it is safest and wisest, in order to be ready on *that* day, to be ready on *every* day—to take care that our profession of Christianity be adorned by the light of divine grace, and that our Christian course be such as is described by the Wise Man, Prov. iv. 18, or in the words of the Saviour Himself, St. Luke xii. 35-41.

QUESTIONS.

What discourse precedes this parable? How are the two connected? To what period does the word 'then' refer? What is here meant by 'the Kingdom of Heaven'? Mention other passages in which Christ's second coming is set forth under a similar figure. To what marriage customs are there allusions in the parable? By whom, on such occasions, is the bridegroom accompanied? Who accompany the bride? What

reception is prepared for her as she approaches her future home? How are the friends rewarded for their trouble? Who are meant by the 'ten virgins'? Why is the Church expressed by this figure? At what hour do Eastern marriages take place? To what, in consequence, are there frequent allusions in Scripture? Of what were *all* the virgins in possession? What is the meaning of the 'lamps'? and of the 'oil'? What do the *five* virgins of each sort merely signify? In what other parables have we represented the mixture of good and evil in Christ's Church? In which of our Saviour's discourses is the same truth taught? How was the folly of the one class of virgins manifested? How do the wise support their Christian profession? Where else is this compared to lights burning? How does St. Peter describe these two classes of Christians? Who is the author of these Christian graces? Of whom is oil an emblem in Scripture? Why was our Saviour called *Christ* or *Messiah*? Is the same figure used with respect to Christians? How was the High Priest set apart to his office? What command was given with reference to the oil with which the High Priest was anointed? Why? How does the Psalmist describe the superiority of the Messiah's anointing? State, in a few words, the essential difference between the 'lamps' and the 'oil.' What do we learn from the fact that *all* the virgins, both wise and foolish, slumbered and slept? What caution, in consequence, does our Saviour elsewhere give? What caution upon this point does St. Paul give? When did the bridegroom arrive? What is intimated by this? How, in other passages, is the suddenness of Christ's coming represented? What tradition have the Jews with reference to the coming of their Messiah? What practice, in consequence, arose in the Primitive Church? What was the effect of the midnight cry? What may we learn from this? In what condition did the foolish virgins find themselves? What did they do? What may we learn from this? How did the wise virgins answer them? What doctrine of the Church of Rome is condemned by this answer? What advice did the wise give to the foolish? Is the obtaining of grace ever represented in Scripture as a thing to be *bought*? What may be regarded as the purchase-money? [Renouncing everything that stands in the way of God's grace—such as pride, sin, self-righteousness, &c.] What may we learn from the fact of the foolish virgins being too late? What does the 'shutting of the door' represent? Quote other passages which show the unalterable nature of the future state. What claim do the foolish make by the use of the term 'lord' to the bridegroom? What feeling is expressed by its repetition? Where else do we find

the same image occur of the excluded seeking admission? What is the moral of the parable? Prove from Scripture the *certainty* of Christ's coming again. What is the only way to be ready *when* He comes? How does Solomon represent the course of the just man? In what language does our Saviour?

THE TALENTS.

St. Matt. xxv. 14-30.

14 For *the kingdom of heaven* is as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

NOTES.



HIS parable may be viewed as a further illustration and enforcement of the moral contained in the preceding. There the virgins are represented as *waiting* for their lord—here we have the servants *working* for him; there the necessity for personal holiness was inculcated—here the active discharge of

those practical duties and obligations which result from our Christian profession.

The words 'the kingdom of Heaven,' are not in the original, and 'the Son of Man,' in the preceding verse, more naturally supplies the deficiency. The connection between the two parables is thus more apparent. 'Watch therefore, &c.,' 'for *He* is as a man travelling into a far country, &c.' By this is meant Christ's leaving this world and ascending into Heaven, after having completed the work of man's redemption; there to remain at the right hand of God, till His coming again to judge the quick and the dead.

Before setting out, this man called together his servants, or slaves, and delivered unto them his goods. It is necessary, for the right understanding of the parable, to bear in mind the relation in which slaves stood to their masters. Many of them were trained to be artisans, or to engage in mercantile affairs; and some for even higher situations—as physicians, &c. They were allowed to exercise these callings on condition of paying a fixed yearly sum to their master: or, as in the parable, they were intrusted with money to trade with on their master's account; and, being his absolute property, they might be punished, in case of negligence, in any way and to any extent that he thought proper.

By these servants are represented the apostles, and then Christ's ministers in all ages; upon the former, while on earth—and especially on the day of Pentecost, after His Ascension—He bestowed many excellent gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit for the discharge of their commission (St. Mark xvi. 15; Rom. i. 16). To His faithful servants now, Christ still gives of His inexhaustible fulness, to enable them to fulfil the duties of their ministry. And since all Christians have gifts entrusted to them, which they are expected to use for their own and their neighbours' welfare, the parable may be considered as extending to all sorts and conditions of men.

The 'talents' in the parable were distributed 'according to the ability' of each of the servants; and afterwards we find the master satisfied with an increase proportioned to the sum with which each had been entrusted.

These talents represented, primarily, all those extra-

ordinary gifts and graces which Christ conferred on the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel, for the extension of His kingdom (1 Cor. xii. 4-11; Eph. iv. 11-14). But, besides these *spiritual* gifts, all *natural* gifts and endowments—such as wealth, power, abilities, influence, &c.—may be included under the term *talent*, since all these are bestowed for the advancement of spiritual ends, and ought to be consecrated to God's service (Rom. xii. 6).

We may learn from this that God has not endowed mankind with the full sovereignty of these gifts, but that He looks upon them as being still His own. Out of this parable also arose the use of the word 'talent,' to signify any mental endowments—and hence the word bears witness that these are merely trusts committed to our care. We may also learn a lesson against envy or discontent, since these talents are distributed 'according to the several ability of each.' Whether a man have few talents or many, all has been arranged according to the wisdom of God the giver; and it is only pride or folly that leads any one to envy the condition or circumstances of his neighbour. God knows best where His servants may or may not be found most useful, and there can be no question in regard to His disposing of them accordingly (Rom. xii. 4-9; 1 Cor. iv. 7).

The 'talents' were intended to be used for the master's benefit; God's gifts are, in like manner, intended to be used for the edification of His Church (1 Cor. xii. 7; Eph. iv. 8-16).

The verses 16-18 embrace the whole period that intervenes between the first and second coming of Christ. The two diligent servants are representatives of all who are faithful in their office and ministry, whatsoever that may be, of all who do their duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place them, and who are employing their abilities in doing good to the extent of their means and opportunity.

In the conduct of the third servant, who 'went and digged, &c,' we have a representation of those who, having received the natural and spiritual gifts of God at their birth and at baptism, take no care to improve them; but suffer them to remain useless and unemployed, like money laid up in a bag, which if properly used might be of much

advantage, not only to themselves but also to others, but which while so locked up is alike unprofitable to the owner and to all besides (compare *Ecclus.* xx. 30, 31). Observe, it was his *lord's* money this servant hid, not his own, so that he could not say, 'Is it not lawful, &c.' (*St. Matt.* xx. 15).

'After a long time, &c.' This refers to the second coming of Christ to judge the world; when each one will have to give an account of the manner in which he has improved the advantages bestowed upon him (*Acts* i. 11, xvii. 31; *Rom.* xiv. 12; *2 Cor.* v. 10).

The first two servants gave in their account with joy (*Heb.* xiii. 17; *1 John* ii. 28); because they had something to show, as *St. Paul* earnestly desired he might have (*1 Thess.* ii. 19; *2 Cor.* i. 14). They acknowledged, however, that they had only improved a trust committed to them. 'Thou deliveredst unto me,'—as *St. Paul* also said (*1 Cor.* xv. 10).

Both gain in equal proportions, viz., he that had five talents gains five, he that had two gains two; justly therefore the lord gives an equal commendation and an equal reward to each—they shall both alike enter into their master's joy. Allusion is here made to a feast or banquet, to which he now invites them; and, as *slaves* were never invited to their master's table, this invitation was equivalent to making them *free*, illustrating our Lord's words on another occasion (*St. John* xv. 15). We have here also displayed the wisdom and equity of that established rule of God's judicial procedure: viz., that 'unto whomsoever much is given, &c.' (*St. Luke* xii. 47, 48). He requires no services above the reach of our faculties; no improvement beyond the means and opportunities conferred upon us; though perfectly free in the distribution of His favours, He is strictly just and equitable in His demands (*Rom.* ix. 14; *Gen.* xviii. 25). We learn here, also, that the rewards of the faithful will be rather in proportion to the uprightness of their hearts, the activity of their zeal in improving the advantages they have enjoyed, than according to the real extent or actual amount of their services; as *St. Paul* also says, *2 Cor.* viii. 12.

In the case of the third servant, we are instructed that faithfulness is expected by God in *small* things as well as

great; that no one is excused for indolence because he can do but little. His conduct arose out of a false view of the character of his master—‘I knew thee,’ &c. This is a proverbial expression descriptive of the avaricious, who require an increase far exceeding what they give. Here, provided he can make an excuse for himself, the servant does not hesitate malevolently to asperse the character of a gracious master: in like manner, a sinner—from a dislike to the religion of Christ—cherishes hard thoughts of God, representing Him as the tyrant Pharaoh, who required bricks but refused the straw (Exod. v. 7). These hard thoughts, as in the parable, beget fear—‘I was afraid:’ and that fear makes them still more slothful, wicked, and unfaithful. Thus the predominant evil passions of men have great influence in forming their notions of God and religion (Ps. l. 20, 21). It is false, groundless, and most dishonourable to God, to represent His service as slavery (1 John v. 3: see also the second Collect for Morning Prayer).

The character of the man is also seen in the morose, surly brevity with which he returns his talent. He uses these words only—‘There, you have your own’ (Ἰδε, ἔχεις τὸ σόν): ‘if I have not made it more, as the others have done, I have not made it less; I have not squandered it away, but herewith return it as I received it.’ This is also the plea of many professing Christians. What is more common than to hear people say, ‘I have never done any man wrong, and if I have not served God to the same extent as many others, I am also not so wicked as many others, and therefore I trust in His mercy to fare at last as well as my neighbours.’ The sequel of the parable shows this to be a most dangerous delusion; and woe will be to him who has no better plea to rely upon when called to give in his final account (St. Matt. xxv. 45, 46).

The lord of this servant takes no trouble either to dispute or deny the accuracy and truthfulness of the character ascribed to him; but proceeds at once to answer the servant on his own grounds, making his own mouth to condemn him (Job xv. 6; 2 Sam. i. 16). He properly describes him as being ‘wicked’ or ‘malicious’ as well as slothful; on account of the malignity of disposition which he manifested in slandering his master without provocation—‘Thou

knewest that I reap,' &c. This ought to be read as a question, 'Didst thou know? &c.': otherwise, it would make our Saviour allow that He reaped where He did not sow, which was not true. The meaning is, 'Grant that I am severe and exacting, why did you not act in accordance with such a conviction? The least you ought to have done, in such a case, was to have endeavoured to gain for me what I had a right to expect, as you might be sure my exacting nature would demand it.' He then points out to him how he might have acted, even consistently with these hard thoughts of his master: he might have lent the talent on usury* in order to gain some benefit. Although his indolence might stand in the way of his trading like his fellow-servants, it could be no obstacle to such an arrangement; and therefore he justly merited the sentence of condemnation which was passed upon him.

The slothful servant's doom is now pronounced, since neither in one way nor another had he tried to promote his master's interest. This doom is two-fold: the first part *negative*,—viz., the forfeiture of the unemployed talent, which is taken from him as a punishment, and given as an additional reward to him who has ten talents. 'To every one that hath shall be given, &c.' This plainly intimates, that such persons as carefully improve the advantages which they possess, and the means they have of being useful, may with good reason expect more extensive opportunities of doing good, and consequently obtain for themselves a more glorious reward. And also that such as neglect the advantages which are in their possession shall at last be deprived of them, and find that they have been transferred to others (see 1 Sam. xv. 28, and compare Rev. iii. 11).

The second part of the doom is *positive*. The servant is cast out into the darkness of the street, while his fellow-servants, in the light and comfort of the banquet-chamber, celebrate their master's return. As light is a natural emblem of joy and happiness, the future state of the righteous

* The usurers, exchangers, or bankers, were persons who received money at a low rate of interest in order to lend it at a higher rate. They usually sat at tables or benches in the temple with a supply of coin, either to exchange or to lend to those Jews who came from foreign countries to attend the temple service (St. Matt. xxi. 12).

is frequently represented under that image (Ps. xcvi. 11). In like manner, as darkness naturally suggests to the mind a condition the most gloomy and dismal, it is a fit representation of the future state of the wicked; who shall be excluded from the society and the joys of the blessed, and also subjected to the anguish of unavailing remorse and despair.

The important lesson, therefore, to be learned from this parable is, that we have each our talent, and that a service is required from each; that though from him who has received much, much will be required, the circumstance of having received little will be no sufficient excuse for not rendering to God of that little. God has not created even the meanest insect without its specific use in His creation; nor has He placed any man in His Church without assigning to him some particular duty for which he is responsible, and for the due performance of which he must one day render a strict account. *Men will be judged not only for doing wrong, but also for neglecting to do what is right.*

QUESTIONS.

What connects the present with the preceding parable? What is the difference between the two? Are the words 'Kingdom of Heaven' in the original? What words would have better supplied the ellipsis? What is meant by the man's 'taking his journey into a far country'? Before going, whom did this man call before him? For what purpose? In what relation did servants or slaves stand to their masters? How were many of them trained? What were they then allowed to do? What was often given to others? For what purpose? What power had the master over the slave? Who are primarily intended by these servants? To whom may the term be extended? Why? How were the talents distributed? With what was the master afterwards satisfied? What are *primarily* meant by the 'talents'? What, besides *spiritual* gifts, may be included under the term? Why? Why are all these bestowed? What has God reserved to himself with respect to them? What do we generally mean now by the term 'talent'? What does this use of the term teach us with respect to these? What lesson are we taught from the fact that the talents were distributed 'according to the ability' of each who received them? Illustrate this from Scripture. For whose benefit were these talents given? What is signified by this? What period of time is included in verses 16 to

18? Of whom are the two diligent servants the representatives? Of whom is the slothful servant a type? How does the Son of Sirach speak of such men? Whose money did this servant hide? Had it been his own, what might he have said? What is meant by 'the time of reckoning'? Prove from Scripture the certainty of Christ's second coming. What is its object? How do the first two servants give in their account? Why? What desire did St. Paul express on this subject? What acknowledgment is contained in the words 'Thou deliveredst unto me'? Exemplify this acknowledgment. What reward did each of the two servants receive? Why were they made equal? Illustrate this. What, in this respect, is the rule of God's judicial procedure? Prove God's justice in judgment. What may we learn from the fact that he who had only *one* talent was yet called to account? From what false view of his master's character did his conduct arise? What does this proverbial expression describe? How does the sinner view God's character? What feeling is caused by this false view? What conduct does this lead to? By what are men chiefly influenced in forming their opinions of God and religion? Show that the opinion of God being unreasonable and harsh in His judgment is false. How does the Liturgy express this truth? How does the servant express self-satisfaction? Is this common among mankind? Does the lord of the servant vindicate his own character? Instead of this, what does he proceed to do? Why does he call him 'a wicked' as well as slothful servant? 'Thou knewest, &c.': how should this be read? Why? Give the meaning of it. How ought this servant to have acted, on the supposition that his opinion of his master was correct? What is now meant by *usury*? What is the meaning in the parable? Was it lawful for an Israelite to take interest on a loan from another Israelite? [Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 36.] Who were the exchangers? Where did they sit to transact business? What twofold punishment was inflicted on the slothful servant? To whom was the unused talent given? On what principle? What may those who improve the advantages which they possess reasonably expect? Illustrate this part of the parable. What is the *positive* part of the punishment? How would his fellow-servants be employed when he was cast out? Of what is light the obvious emblem? What, in consequence, is frequently represented by it? Of what is darkness the natural emblem? Of what, then, is it a fit representation? What great moral truth may we learn from this parable?

THE POUNDS.

St. Luke xix. 11-27.

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

NOTES.



OUR SAVIOUR'S design in this parable was to correct an error in the minds of many of His followers: viz., that He was actually on His way to Jerusalem, in order to assume openly the kingdom as the Messiah. The disciples were led to form this impression from having heard Him declare in the house of Zaccheus that He was come to seek and to save

that which was lost, and to bring salvation to the sons of Abraham.

As this assumption of His kingdom was reserved for a later period, and as Christ was going up to Jerusalem to be offered as a sacrifice, it became necessary to correct the prevalent erroneous expectations. In doing so, He contrives to bring under their notice the conduct both of His opponents and of His professed servants during the intervening state of trial, and the treatment of both on His return to judgment.

Although closely resembling the parable of 'The Talents,' this of 'The Pounds' differs from it in several particulars: *e. g.*, *that* was spoken after Christ had entered Jerusalem—*this* while on His way thither; *that* was delivered on the Mount of Olives—*this* in the house of Zaccheus (for we are told 'He *added* and spake a parable'); in *that* the deposits are unequal, but the rate of profit equal, for both the five and the two talents are doubled, and consequently the rewards are equal—in *this* the deposits are equal, but the gains, and consequently the rewards, differ.

'A certain nobleman, &c.' Allusion is here made to a circumstance of frequent occurrence in the days of Roman supremacy: *viz.*, that tributary kings were required to proceed to Rome in order to their being invested with the regal dignity. The Jews had had instances of this in the case of Herod the Great, who—originally a subordinate officer in Judea—had, while at Rome, been made king of Judea, and been sent back as such, invested with authority from the Roman power; and also in the case of his son Archelaus—the circumstances of whose journey to Rome are minutely described in this parable (compare 1 Macc. viii. 13).

'And he called his ten servants,' or, as it ought to be translated, 'ten of his servants,' as it would be absurd to suppose that a nobleman fit to be raised to a throne, had only ten servants belonging to him; especially when we consider the immense households of antiquity.

The 'nobleman,' or prince, here, is our Blessed Lord Himself, the eternal Son of God. His 'going into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom' is His Ascension into Heaven—to sit down at the right hand of God—to be invested with the dignity of Mediatorial King. His

'servants' may be either His Apostles, who upon His return are to give an account of the progress of His Gospel; or Christians in general, who are accountable for every talent, whether natural or acquired, which they possess.

The value of the 'pound' is uncertain, ranging, in the opinions of commentators, from 3*l.* to 9*l.* The exact value is immaterial to the meaning or design of the parable, which is intended to point out that the whole of what we receive from our Creator—knowledge or other talents—is to be laid out in His service. Some persons make the *pound* to mean those privileges of the Gospel Kingdom bestowed equally upon all Christians inasmuch as each servant had a similar sum; while by the *talents* they understand the gifts of intellect, property, and power, which are unequally distributed, as the Owner sees fit.

'But his citizens hated him, &c.' This is a circumstance which actually took place in the case of Archelaus. During a tumult which followed upon his accession, his soldiers had slain 3,000 of the people; whereupon the Jews sent an embassy to Augustus to petition against him, requesting to live by their own laws under a Roman governor. The application was unsuccessful, and Archelaus, on his return, inflicted terrible vengeance upon those 'who would not have him to reign over them' (see *Josephus*, 'Antiquities,' xvii. 9).

These 'citizens' represent the Jews, who were especially Christ's fellow-citizens; for, 'according to the flesh,' He was of the seed of Abraham, and a member of the Jewish polity. They showed their hatred of Him not merely by rejecting Him with scorn during His life, and at last putting Him to an ignominious death; but also, after His Ascension, in the persecution and martyrdom of His followers. The very declaration in the parable found utterance twice from their own lips: once when they said to Pilate 'We have no king but Cæsar;' and again when they said to him, 'Write not the King of the Jews, but that *He said*, &c.' (St. John xix. 15-21).

'And when he was returned, &c.' This refers to the great day of accounts—the Judgment Day—when Christ will 'render to every man according to his works' (Rom. ii. 6): praise and rewards to such as have been faithful to Him while He was away; punishment more or less severe, to

those who have abused the opportunity, and taken advantage of His absence, to work the 'hidden works of darkness.' The rewards are royal, as He is now invested with royal dignity; He sets them over cities. In the parable of 'The Talents,' the master—being only a private person—had no such power of setting his servants in high places of authority; the rewards there are consequently quite different. Here, also, as the rewards are kingly, so are they also proportioned to the faithfulness of the servants: he whose pound had made five pounds more was placed over five cities; he whose pound had made ten was set over ten. In this there is probably an allusion to the ancient custom of rewarding meritorious services with the government and revenues of a city or district. Christ here teaches that our rewards in Heaven will be in *proportion* to our faithfulness in improving our talents while upon earth.

'And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, &c.' The word translated 'napkin' (*συνδάριον*) is of Latin origin, signifying literally a handkerchief to wipe off perspiration; and may be designedly employed here to mark the slothfulness of this servant, who, by using the handkerchief to wrap up the pound which has been entrusted to him, shows that he has not been 'earning his bread by the sweat of his brow' (Gen. iii. 19).

'For I feared thee, &c.' The word 'austere' comes from a root which denotes the *hard, dry*, taste of unripe fruit or sharp wine. Hence it is applied metaphorically to men of a *sour* visage, and of a *hard* and *gripping* disposition (see 2 Macc. xiv. 30).

'Thou takest up that thou layedst not down, &c.' This is descriptive of an *avaricious* temper, marked by the desire of acquiring wealth at the expense of another.

This slothful servant is the representative of all those who deem it sufficient to abstain from the commission of positive sin; and, because the gracious Giver of what they have requires more than that they should merely abstain from abusing His gifts, regard Him as a severe task-master, as unreasonable as one who should claim to reap the field which he has not sown or to take up the pledge which he did not deposit.

The 'unprofitable' servant is next condemned out of his own mouth—'Thou knewest, &c.' This, as in the

parable of 'The Talents,' is to be read as a question. It is not an admission of the servant's charge, but is intended to show more clearly that the very character which he falsely ascribes to his master ought to have stimulated him to exertion; and if he had been unable to increase his capital by *trade*, such as his fellow-servants had done, he should have endeavoured to satisfy the owner by entrusting his pound to a banker, who would have returned it with *interest* (not *usury*). The word 'usury' is now restricted to an *exorbitant* rate of interest.*

'And he said unto them that stood by, &c.' These are clearly the Holy Angels, who never fail to appear and take an active part in all scenes descriptive of the final judgment (see St. Matt. xiii. 41, 49, xxii. 13). The answer made to one of the bystanders—who was surprised, if not displeased, at the command given—sets forth the principles upon which God will distribute the rewards of His Kingdom (compare 1 Sam. xv. 28; Rev. iii. 11). From the treatment of the third servant, we learn that neither mean abilities nor imperfect knowledge will excuse inactivity in God's service.

'But those mine enemies, &c.' This illustrates another incident in the life of Archelaus, who, being confirmed in the government of Judea, returned home and tyrannised for ten years over those who had tried to shake off his authority. After enduring great cruelties, the Jews made a second complaint to Cæsar, prevailed against Archelaus, and procured his banishment to Vienne in Gaul.

This part of the parable denotes the ruin that was to come upon the Jewish nation for rejecting the Messiah, and also upon all sinners for not receiving Him as their King. 'Slay them before me.' This was the usual practice in Eastern courts (1 Sam. x. 27, xi. 12), and is fearfully expressive of Christ's unmitigated wrath upon the enemies of righteousness, which shall be revealed in that day when grace shall have come to an end, and judgment

* In countries like Palestine, where there is little commerce, the great motive for borrowing is necessity; and the value of the loan cannot be ascertained by calculation, as it may be where it is procured to carry on trade. In those countries where money is borrowed for mercantile purposes, the *borrowers* are often the rich, the *lenders* the comparatively poor. Hence the lawfulness of receiving recompense for the use of articles lent must be determined by the principles of equity.

without mercy shall have begun (Rev. xiv. 10: see also Heb. i. 13, and compare this with Josh. x. 24).

QUESTIONS.

What error was the present parable designed to correct? What remark of our Saviour's led to this error? Why was it necessary to correct this erroneous expectation in Christ's followers? Of what two classes of people does Christ here combine the conduct? What other parable does this closely resemble? Mention some differences of time and place in regard to the delivery of these parables. How does the context show the *place* where this parable was spoken? Mention any differences in the meaning, which are to be found in the parables themselves. To what practice is there an allusion in verse 12? Give examples. Give a better translation of the expression 'His ten servants.' Why? Whom does the nobleman here represent? What is meant by the 'far country'? Why did our Saviour ascend thither? Who are meant by His 'servants'? What is the design of the parable? As each servant received an equal sum, what gifts have some supposed the *pound* to mean? What, on the other hand, have they supposed the *talents* to mean? What historical fact is alluded to in verse 14? Who were Christ's fellow-citizens? How? How did they show their hatred of Him? Did they ever, with reference to Him, give utterance to an expression similar to that in the parable? What period is meant by His 'return'? What is the object of Christ's second coming? How do the rewards in this parable differ *in nature* from those in 'The Talents'? To what custom is there an allusion in this part of the parable? How were the rewards distributed? What do we learn from this? What did the third servant bring? What is here the meaning of the word 'napkin'? Is there here any appropriateness in the use of this word? What is the derivation of the word translated 'austere'? What is its figurative meaning? 'Taking up, &c.': of what temper is this descriptive? Of whom is this slothful servant the representative? In what light do this class of people regard God? In what manner does his lord condemn him? How should the words 'Thou knewest, &c.' be read? What ought this servant to have done, upon the supposition that this was really his lord's character? What does the word 'usury' here mean? To what is the term now restricted? Were the Israelites a commercial people? In non-commercial countries, what is the great motive for borrowing? Can the value of a loan, in such circumstances, be accurately calculated? Under what circumstances can the value of a loan be calculated?

In commercial countries, who are often the persons who borrow money? How is the lawfulness to be determined? Who are meant by 'those that stood by'? Show that the holy angels take part in scenes of judgment. To what expression of surprise or displeasure did one of the bystanders give utterance? On what principle did the Lord say the rewards of His kingdom would be distributed? What may we learn from the treatment of the *third* servant? 'But those mine enemies, &c.': what historical incident is here exemplified? What became of Archelaus? To what does this part of the parable refer? Illustrate the words 'Slay them *before me.*' Of what is this expression fearfully expressive?

