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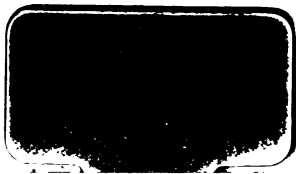
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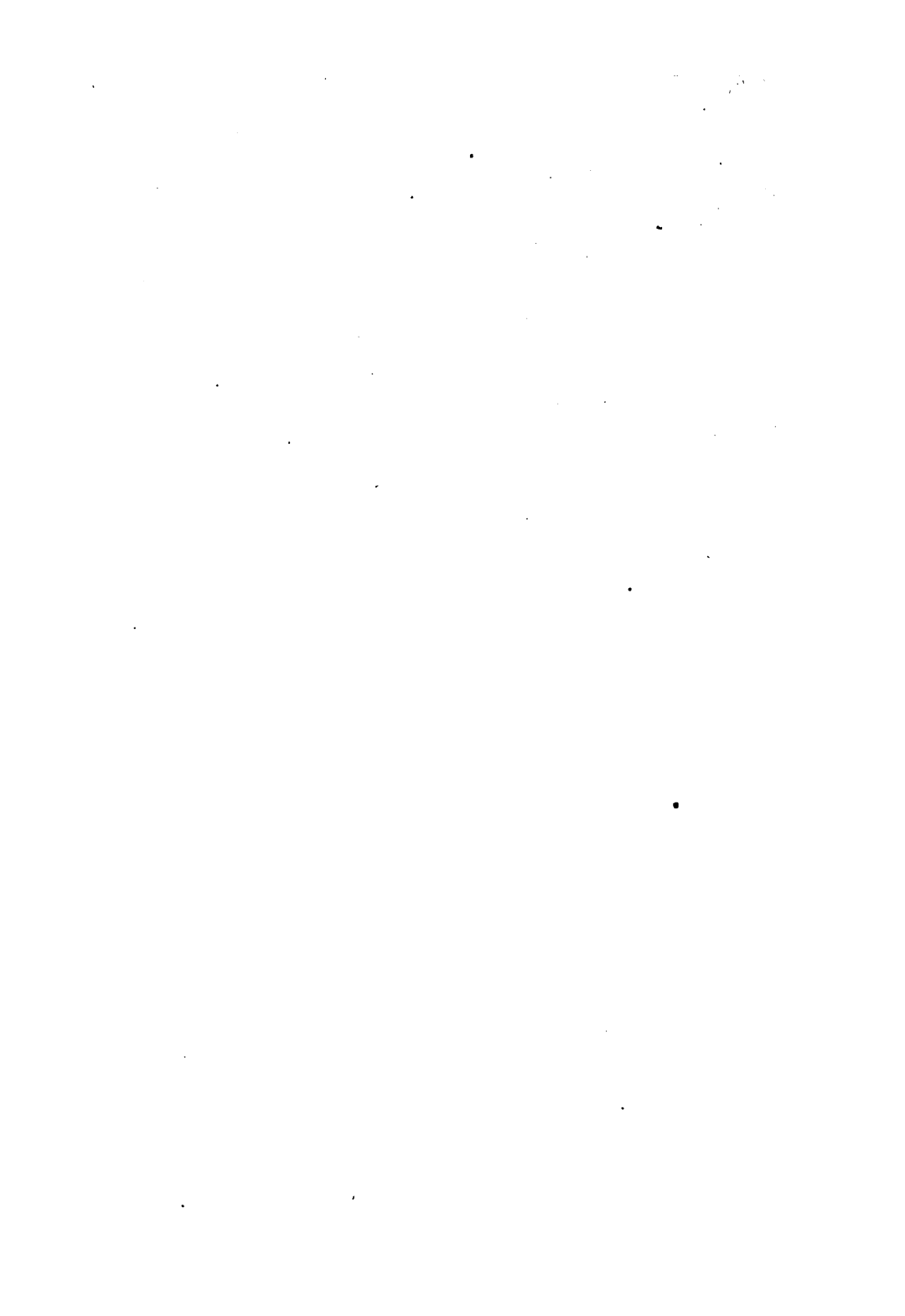


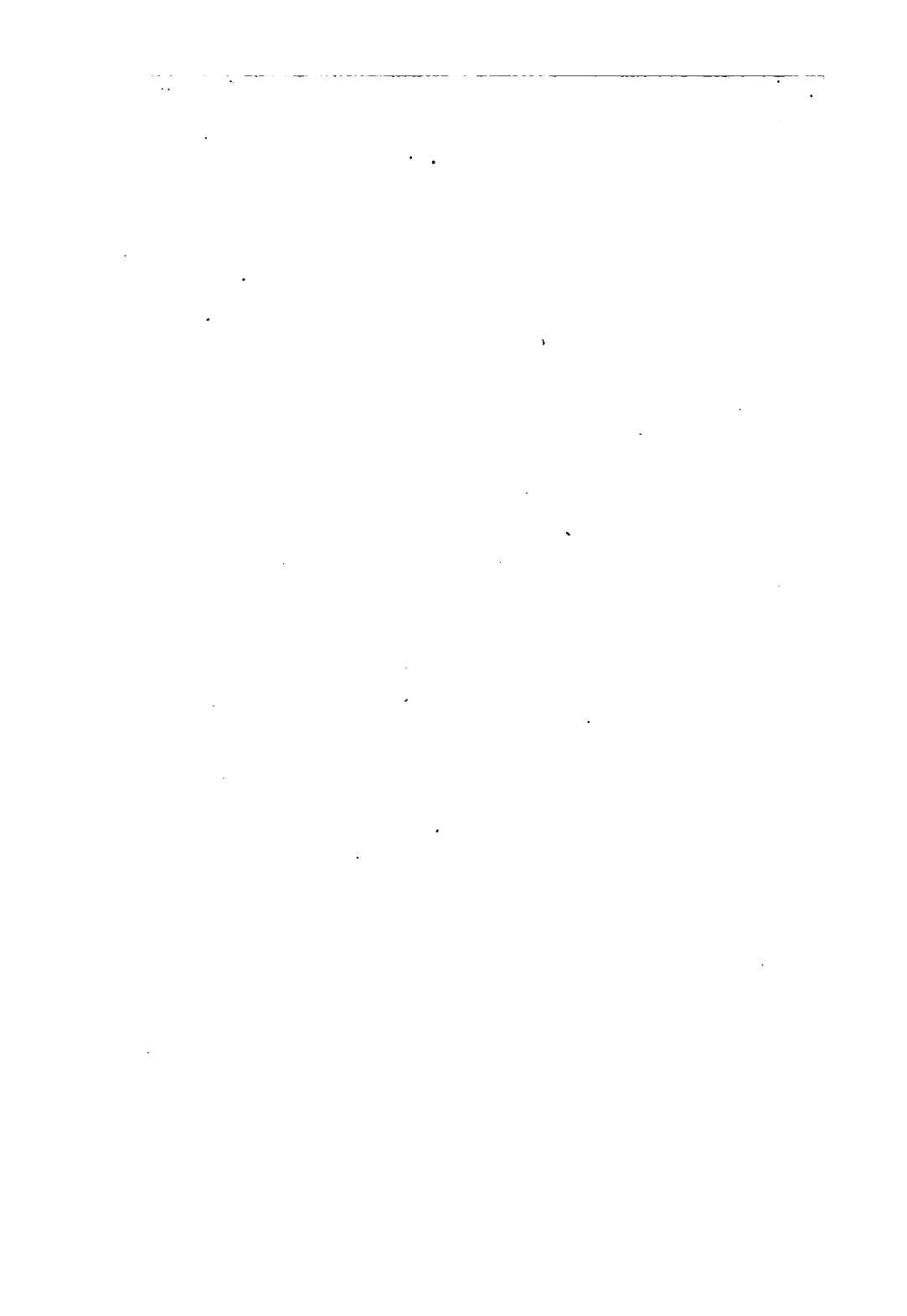
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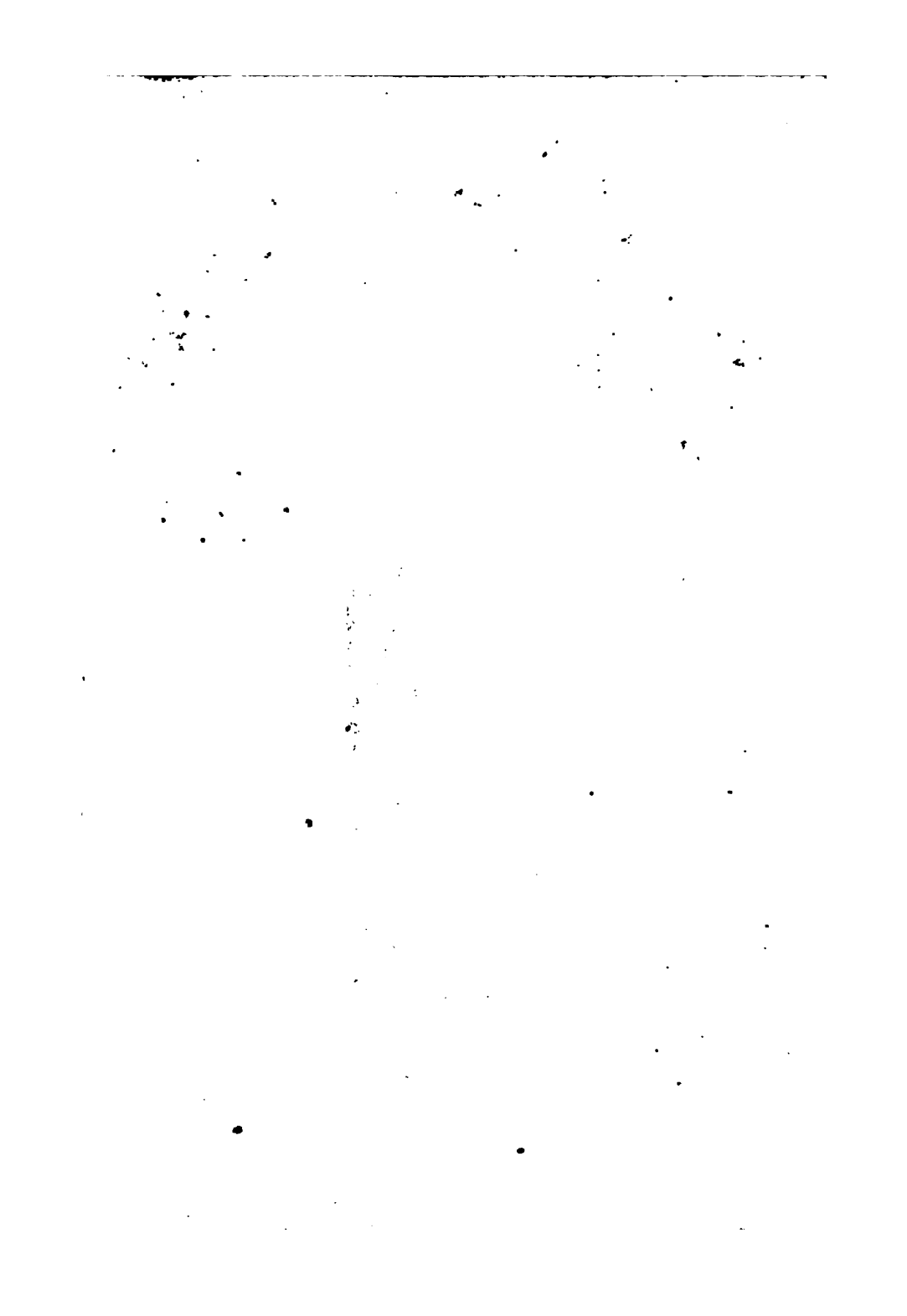














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DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

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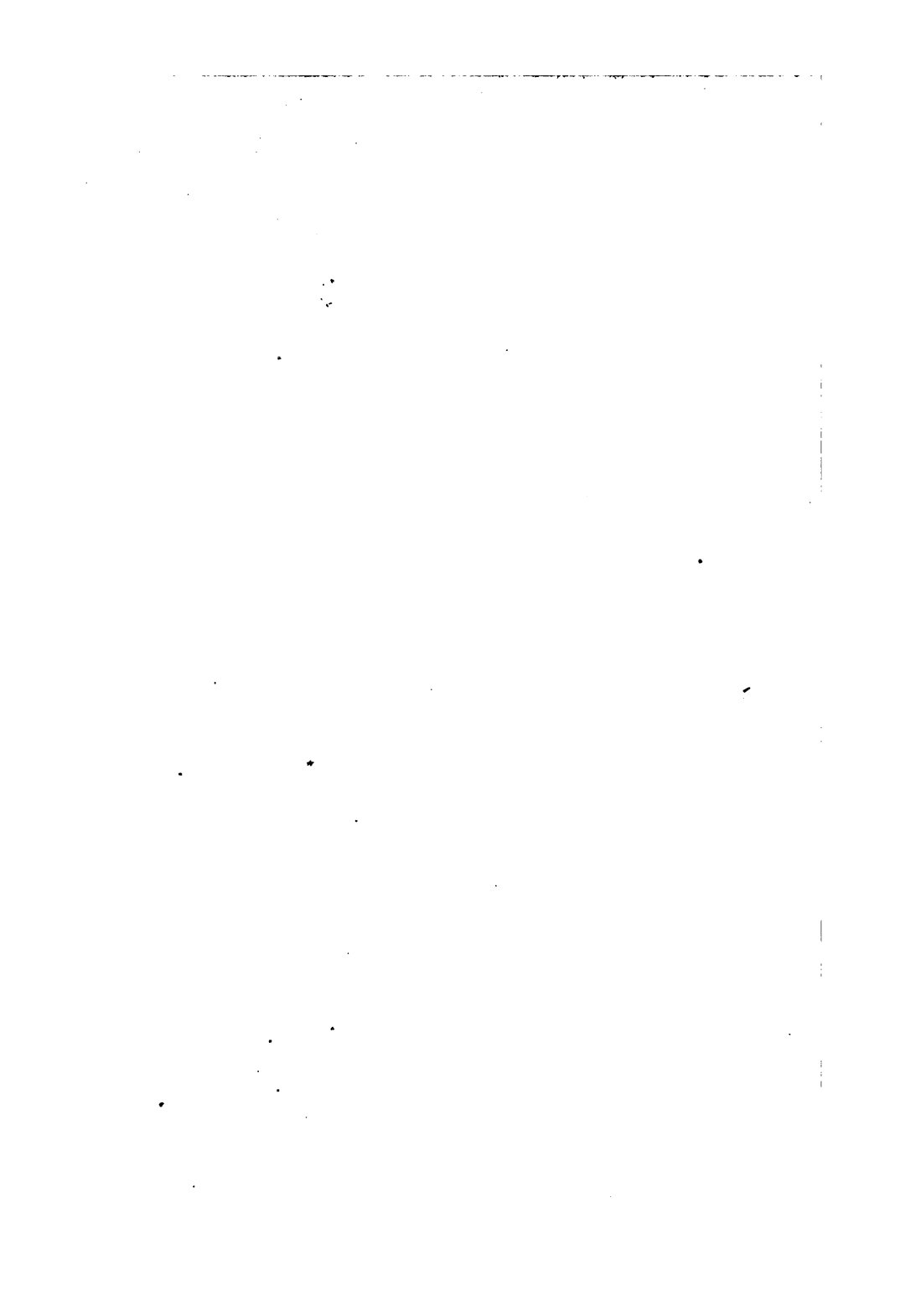
THE LIFE & DEATH OF OUR LORD.



W. Miller

*Nazareth*

WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND COMPANY EDINBURGH, 1867



DAILY  
BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY

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NEW EDITION REVISED AND ENLARGED BY

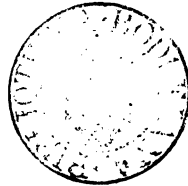
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EVENING SERIES.

*LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR LORD.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE present Volume of the DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS is substantially a history of the LORD JESUS, deduced from the four Gospels, and so related as to comprise an interpretation of the incidents recorded. The consecutive 'READINGS' are more connected with each other than in any of the previous Volumes, and might almost be perused as a continuous narrative divided into chapters. This feature of the Volume has grown out of the necessity which existed for producing *all* the incidents of our Lord's career. But although a *selection* of topics was thus precluded, some circumstances have been set forth in more full detail than others, either on account of their paramount importance, or from the illustrative matter they involved, and the explanations they required.

The observations embodied in the narrative, or embraced in the mere terms of statement, are the result of careful consideration, and often of much research. And it is hoped that some readers may receive assistance and benefit, for the better understanding of our Lord's history as a whole, from the solicitude with which the Writer has endeavoured to realize, and to bring continually into view, the position which Jesus appeared to occupy in the eyes of the people; the condition of the country, and the state of Jewish public opinion at the time He appeared; the fluctuations of that opinion in regard to himself; and the

causes that led to, or the effects that resulted from, the particular circumstances recorded, showing, it is believed, that the Gospel history is not made up of a series of isolated incidents or 'anecdotes;' but that all its parts will be found, by those who examine them with attention, not only to manifest a determinate purpose, but to bear a close relation to each other.

To arrange these incidents, as reported in varying order by four different historians, into one coherent narrative, is, however, confessedly a work of great difficulty; and their proper allocation in the present Volume has often been a matter of anxious consideration with the Author. The order adopted is mainly that of Dr. White's Greek Diatessaron, with the emendations of Dr. Macbride, compared with the Greek Harmony of Abp. Newcome, in the edition of Dr. Knapp, with the improvements on Newcome in Dr. E. Robinson's Harmony, and with due reference to Lightfoot, and to the recent Synopsis Evangelica of Dr. Tischendorff. The attention which has been given to the orderly arrangement of the different incidents of our Lord's history recorded by the Evangelists, will be abundantly rewarded, if it should induce any reader to enter on the synoptical study of the Gospel narratives.

In the course of the work, the Writer has often, in a quiet way, endeavoured to meet various exceptions which have been taken to particular points in the Gospel history of Christ. But this has not been done always; nor has it been formally any part of his undertaking to consider cavils which have often been refuted, and which few of his readers are likely to encounter, and none of them to entertain.

LONDON, *January* 1853.

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## DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS.

### Twenty-seventh Week—First Day.

THE WORD.—JOHN I. 1-18.

**W**HEN the history of a great personage is written by different hands, the historians seldom commence at the same point of time. One begins with his birth, and reminds us of his parentage, his illustrious line, and his great ancestors. Another, passing over these, takes him up at the commencement of his public career. A third not only recites his birth and parentage, but dwells upon the circumstances which preceded and introduced him, and those which surrounded him when he appeared. Another may go back further still, into the antecedents, reporting all he has been able to learn of anterior history that might be supposed to influence his career, or to prepare the times for his appearing.

The men who wrote the history of Jesus Christ were permitted, by the Holy Spirit, to exemplify the same diversity of procedure in their narratives. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each commences our Lord's history at a different point, corresponding to the intimations just given. Their accounts must, therefore, be collated to furnish a complete narrative; and the exactness with which their several narratives dovetail into each other, to furnish a perfect and coherent whole, is not only admirable in itself, but suggests that this diversity



was designedly permitted, for the purpose of furnishing conclusive evidence of the perfect truthfulness of the writers, and the minute accuracy of their statements.

Matthew commences with a genealogy of Jesus, traced downward from Abraham, and then proceeds to record his marvellous birth. Mark says nothing of his birth; but after rapidly connecting 'the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,' with the prophecies of the Old Testament, proceeds at once to the commencement of his public mission, by narrating his baptism in the Jordan, and his formal recognition from heaven. Luke goes further back, to the circumstances preceding the birth of the Lord's harbinger, and then furnishes a more particular account than Matthew had supplied of the events preceding the birth of Christ himself. But John goes back further still into the remote and ancient past. He speaks but little of that human birth which chiefly engages the attention of Matthew and Luke. He says of it simply, that He 'was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' He goes back—back, into the darkneses of the eternal past, before the creation, and finds Him, who thus became flesh, 'in the beginning with God.' He ascends to the heaven of heavens, and finds there, in the bosom of the Father, Him who had, in those latter days, laid aside this glory to become the light of men. The other evangelists knew all this; but John alone set it forth plainly at the beginning. There was a reason. John wrote later than the others; and it was needed that there should be an explicit declaration on a matter respecting which men had already begun to question and dispute.

It is further remarkable, that while the other evangelists carefully record our Lord's final ascent to heaven, John, who at the commencement brings Him down from heaven as the incarnate Word, is alone silent with respect to his return thither. He knew this great fact to be already fully stated; and it was the will of the Spirit that he should put on record much which they had passed over, rather than that he should repeat what had already been sufficiently attested.

We need not enter into the questions which have been raised as to the import of the Greek term (LOGOS) translated WORD, nor into the views under which the sacred writer applied it to Christ. It is enough to know, that he certainly and undeniably denotes by this term the Son of God, who, as Jesus, came into the world, and the world knew Him not; who, as the Christ, to whom all the prophets had borne witness, came unto his own, and his own received Him not; who, as the Light, came to shine into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended Him not. Some, however, beheld in Him that glory which could belong to no other than 'the Only-begotten of the Father;' a few comprehended Him; and some, although they did not yet fully comprehend Him, rejoiced to receive Him as their Saviour and their Lord. And what profit had they? Verily this, that although by acknowledging Him they were exposed to a great fight of afflictions, and were pierced through with many sorrows, yet, to 'as many as received Him, gave He power to become the SONS OF GOD!'

'His by redemption, by adoption his;'

in the possession of which high privilege and glorious distinction they might well afford to trample beneath their feet, not only the treasures of the world, but its thorns and torturing scourges. But what is it to receive Him? Oh, if He would but come! would we not receive Him?—would we not set wide open all our chambers for Him to enter in? But, lo, He has passed away into the heavens, where we behold Him not, and whence we cannot receive Him. No, no! There was never but one way of receiving Him; and every one of us can receive Him as did the disciples who walked with Him on earth. The evangelist himself is careful to guard against any misconception on this point, by explaining what it is to receive Him, and who they are to whom it is given, by receiving Him, to become the sons of God,—'even to them that believe on his name.' Therefore the Ethiopian eunuch, when he declared that he believed 'with all his heart'—that is, with true, appropriating faith—that

Jesus was the Son of God ; therefore the jailer at Philippi, when he 'rejoiced,' believing in the Lord Jesus Christ ; therefore the last heart that has opened to receive Him as a Saviour, —all these, though they beheld Him not with the bodily eye, did as truly receive Him, and did as truly receive the gift to become the sons of God, as those who, in the days of his flesh, did literally receive Him into their houses—literally leaned upon his breast—literally left all, and followed Him.

---

The design of John the evangelist was manifestly to exhibit the incarnate Logos as the life and the light—the quickening and illuminating principle—of man. He had before him the idea of a world dead in sin, and of a church darkened by heresy. He was, therefore, inspired to set forth the eternal Logos as the principle and source of both life and light.

The word *Logos* is the most remarkable term in this gospel, and one of the most remarkable in the whole Bible. That it indicates a person, and is thus a proper name, cannot be disputed. It is no abstract quality or attribute, though it is descriptive of certain distinctive attributes in the person to whom it is given. It is not applied to the mere reason, or mind, or speech of God ; but it designates an active and acting agent, eternally related to God, and manifesting, by his acting, the power, wisdom, and love of Godhead. The spirit of man is invisible ; but it manifests itself by word or speech. 'No man hath seen *God* at any time ;' but the Logos 'hath declared Him.' This analogy, however, must not be pressed too far. There is a depth and a mystery in the relation of the eternal Logos to the eternal Father, which the human mind cannot fathom. The Logos being the sole manifestation of Godhead in all its operations, was, so to speak, the visible or immediate actor in creation : 'All things were made by Him.' The Logos, again, is not only a person distinct from God, absolutely considered, so that the evangelist can say, 'The Logos was with God ;' but the Logos is also in another sense, equal to, identical with God, so that the evangelist can also say, 'The Logos was God.'

But this personal and eternal Logos is exhibited in another, and to us a still more interesting aspect. As the 'Word of God,' He is the revealer of God ; and not only so, but He is himself the grand *revelation of God*. In Him the attributes of God exist, and from Him have been developed. The will of God has ever and only

been made known by and through Him. To Adam in paradise, to the patriarchs and prophets in Israel, to the evangelists and apostles of the New Testament, the Logos revealed the truth ; and not only so, but He himself, in his nature, mission, passion, and triumph, was THE TRUTH. The very central idea of revelation, then, is embodied in this name—a revelation by the Logos contained in the Bible, and a revelation of the Logos made to us through the Bible. This leads to the highest conception of the person, nature, and work of the eternal Logos, as set before us by the apostle John.

### Twenty-seventh Week—Second Day.

ELIAS.—LUKE I. 17.

ISAIAH the prophet, when directed to ‘speak comfortably to Jerusalem,’ announced, ‘The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’<sup>1</sup> Malachi, the last of the prophets, speaking in the Lord’s name, declares, ‘Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ;’<sup>2</sup> and further on he says, in the same great name, ‘Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.’<sup>3</sup>

From these passages the Jews drew the inference, that the Messiah, for whose coming they looked with deep desire, would be preceded by a harbinger to announce Him, and that this harbinger would be no other than Elijah the prophet in person. The correct apprehension of their views in this respect is important to the right understanding of several passages in the gospels ; and as it appears that most of the views now entertained by the Jews, if not all of them, existed in the time of our Lord, they may be usefully cited in illustration.

It is, then, to be observed, that this expectation of Elias, as the forerunner of the Messiah, has led them for many ages to give petitions for his manifestation a prominent place in their

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mal. iv. 5.

public, and doubtless also in their private, prayers. In the notions and expectations which they have connected with his name, they do not forget that the Tishbite tasted not of death; for on this they have founded a large body of too curious speculations—speculations which appear so natural to the Hebrew mind, that the absence of them in the Scriptures might well excite our wonder, did we not know that the holy men of old spake not of themselves, but as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The difference between the traditions and writings of the Hebrews, when left to themselves and the tendencies of their truly oriental minds, and what they produced under the direct teaching of the Divine Spirit, is so great and so signal, as of itself to furnish a powerful argument for the inspiration of the Scriptures, though it has generally been overlooked. Well, seeing that Elijah died not, but was taken away in a whirlwind, it came to be first conjectured, and then very fixedly believed, that although he retains his body, it is not like our bodies—all its essential moisture having been dried up, or evaporated, by that fiery whirlwind which reft him from the earth. He acquired by this change a sort of half-spiritual frame, which qualified him to subsist without meat or drink, or the common necessities of mortal life. They conceived that the prophet, even in this condition of existence, was taken, not to the ‘heaven of heavens,’ but to that earthly paradise from which our first parents were cast forth, where his proper station is beneath the tree of life. Yet he is not so confined to that spot as to preclude him from being in any part of the world where his presence is needed—in many or in all places at once—wherever Jews are; for he has become the special and appointed guardian of their affairs; and wherever they want a helper, there is he, redressing wrong, punishing injustice, and showing mercy. Many beautiful legends have they, relative to the interest Elias takes in the affairs of the Jews, his watchfulness over their conduct, and the good he has at various times done for Israel. He is believed to be present at all circumcisions, on which occasions a chair is set for him; and he is supposed invisibly to occupy it—‘invisibly,’ except

to those learned in the mysteries of the 'Cabala,' who are able to perceive him; whence we have in the Jewish books many accounts of interviews which the learned Rabbis have had with him, and the instructions they have received from him. In these accounts he is described as a venerable old man with a white beard, but without anything in his appearance to suggest that he is not as other men.

It will from this be perceived, that what the Jews look for and desire—as was probably also the case in the time of our Saviour—is not merely the presence of Elias, for he is, in their view, already present, but his manifestation, his public appearance, to announce the approach of the Messiah.

But the Gospels teach us that the personage, whose coming to prepare the Lord's way is predicted in the New Testament, was no other than John the Baptist, whose birth was foreshown by an angel, as that of one who would come 'in the spirit and power of Elias,'—not Elias personally, but the antitype of Elias, as the Messiah himself was the antitype of David. And in this point of view, it is worthy of note, that in the prophecy of Malachi the harbinger is indicated by the official designation of 'Elijah the prophet,' and not by the personal one of 'Elijah the Tishbite,' which is generally applied to him in the history of his career. Our Saviour himself also recognised the Baptist as the foretold Elijah; for when the disciples demurred that they had been taught to expect Elias before the manifestation of the Messiah, He told them that Elias had already come in the person of John. There are, in fact, many analogies of office and character between the two. Both called the people to repentance; and both, at the peril of their lives, fearlessly rebuked iniquity in high places. Both dwelt much apart in the wilderness; and of both it is specially mentioned that they were habitually clad in haircloth, and wore leathern girdles about their loins.

But it may be objected, that John himself, when asked by the Jews, 'Art thou Elias?' answered, 'I am not.' In point of fact, he may not himself have known it. But we do not apprehend his denial in this sense. He knew that they expected

Elias to appear in person, and he declared that he was not Elias in the sense in which the question was asked ; though in another sense he was that Elias, of whose coming, as the precursor of Christ, the prophet Malachi had spoken.

---

The last of the Hebrew prophets, in the closing words of the old Revelation, predicted the opening of the new. Speaking in the name of the God who inspired him, he said, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' His words appear to have been almost forgotten. Perhaps they had never been fully understood by the great body of the nation to which they were addressed, yet they were intended to form, and they did form, the connecting link between the old dispensation and the new ; and the angel who ushered in the new gave the first full interpretation of the words, when he said of the child promised to Zacharias, 'He shall go before Him (before the Messiah), in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord' (Luke i. 17). The mission of the forerunner thus, by divine appointment, formed the introduction to the work of the Saviour. As a herald, John announced Christ's approach, and prepared the people for his reception. The Baptist and the Messiah were linked together, by Old Testament prophecy, by the divine announcement of their advent, and by the miraculous details of their birth.

### *Twenty-seventh Week—Third Day.*

ZACHARIAS.—LUKE I. 5-10.

THE circumstances which preceded and attended the appearance of John the Baptist, are more extraordinary than those accompanying the birth of any person who had hitherto appeared in the world ; and this may well suggest the reflection

—seeing how solemnly the appointed harbinger is brought into the world, how great He must be of whose appearance this man is but the herald! We judge of the greatness of a king by the rank and magnificence of his ambassador; and it ought to assist us to some adequate conception of our Lord's essential greatness, to note that, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than the man who heralded his approach; although it be true that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The father of John was an aged priest 'of the course of Abia,' which is the same as the Abijah of the Old Testament. This may need some explanation. When the priests had become numerous, David divided the whole body into twenty-four classes or 'courses,' which were appointed to do service in weekly rotation, so that each of the courses had to attend at the temple twice in the year for a week each time. Of the twenty-four courses, that of Abijah was the eighth. Of the number that went into captivity, only four of the courses returned, and that of Abijah was not one of them. But these four were divided into twenty-four, in order to reproduce the former distribution; and to render the analogy more complete, they received the same names as the original courses. Hence it is that we find the course of Abia named in the New Testament. Even this division, however, proved eventually insufficient for the designed object of keeping within some bounds the number of priests in regular official service. Josephus affirms that there were as many as 4000 in some of the courses; so that, being too numerous for the duty, the course, when it came up in its turn, was subdivided into seven families, each of which ministered for one day, so that all might take part in the routine of the office. This practically reduced the time of actual service for each priest to one day during the week of the course, and to two days in the year.

Each of these courses had a chief or president, who is called in Ezra the 'prince,' or 'chief of the priests;' and these collectively are probably the same as the 'chief priests' so often mentioned in the New Testament.



When a 'course' came up to relieve the one that had served the preceding week, the particular services of the priests were determined by lot. Certain services were accounted more honourable than the others, and in this way all contention respecting them was avoided. The most honourable of all was that of going *into* the holy place to offer incense upon the golden altar. And on the occasion before us this distinguished office devolved upon the aged Zacharias.

This service was performed twice every day, just before the morning and evening sacrifice, that is, at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon; and the time of offering the incense was also the time of prayer—sweet fumes of the ascending incense being indeed representative of the prayers of the people ascending to God. So, when the priest entered the holy place to offer the incense, the sound of a small bell notified to the assembled people that the time of prayer was come. When this was heard, the priests and Levites, who had not taken their stations, hastened to do so: the space in the court between the great altar of burnt-offerings and the porch of the Lord's house was cleared; and the people, in the different courts of the temple, 'stood and prayed.' The prayers were perfectly silent, as in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican; and to the deep silence which pervaded the great congregation in this solemn moment, there is an emphatic allusion in the apocalyptic vision (Rev. viii. 1, 3), when he who beheld it declares, 'There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour,' while the angel offered incense—'the prayers of the saints'—on the altar before the Throne. This lasted so long as the priest remained within the temple; but the instant he reappeared, the sacrifice was laid upon the altar, and the Levites commenced their psalmody and the sounding of their trumpets.

The reappearance of the priest was always awaited with much interest, and the least delay beyond the time usually occupied occasioned anxiety and alarm. Indeed, the priest always endeavoured to make his stay within as short as became the seemingly discharge of this solemn function; for he knew that if

his stay were protracted, the worshippers without would be in fear lest some judgment from the Lord, on their account or on his own, had befallen him there, which would have been regarded as a national calamity, seeing that he stood for the time as the representative of the people.

Such anxiety and alarm they at this time experienced ; for the stay of Zacharias within the temple was unusually protracted—not long in fact, but long to those who stood without, anxiously counting every moment. At length he appeared. And then his strange and excited aspect showed that something had indeed happened to him in the sacred place ; but when questioned concerning it, they could obtain no answer, for he was dumb. He was not, however, deaf ; and from the signs with which he met their questions, it was found that he had seen a vision in the temple. That it had occurred *there*, must have invested that vision with mysterious and unspeakable importance in their eyes ; for it will be remembered that the interior of the temple was never visited, or even seen, by the people ; so that the mere idea of the interior was an awe and a mystery to them. The priests alone might enter, and they only a few at a time, for the discharge of certain duties about the lamps and the shewbread, and one only at the time of offering incense. Besides which, there were the deeper mysteries of the inner sanctuary, inaccessible even to the priests, and which the high priest alone might enter once in the year. All this would not fail to create the impression, that the vision which had produced effects so signal upon the aged priest, could hardly be one of private interpretation, but must involve some matters of deep public concern, strengthening the desire to learn more than Zacharias could now disclose, and fixing the minds of the people with strong interest on the result.

It is observable, that on this occasion there was ‘ a multitude praying without at the time of incense,’ which has suggested the probability that it was the Sabbath-day ; as it is known that on this day only did a multitude of people attend the temple services. A few devout people were present on other days ; but excepting them, the congregation was then composed of

the priests, the Levites, and a number of persons called 'stationary men,' who were considered to represent the people.

Incense was burned upon the golden altar in the holy place twice each day, and the exact times of the offering are stated in Exodus xxx. 7, 8 : 'And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning : *when he dresseth the lamps*, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps *between the evenings*, he shall burn incense upon it.' The morning incense, therefore, was burned at an early hour ; according to the Mishna, when the break of day was announced by the watchman, and thus before the morning sacrifice. But the evening incense was offered after the evening sacrifice, when the lamps were lighted in the 'twilight.' It is not stated by the evangelist whether it was at the time of morning or of evening incense that Zacharias saw the vision ; most probably it was at the latter time.

The priest, according to the Rabbins, immediately on casting the incense on the fire of the altar, bowed reverently toward the 'holy of holies,' and then retired slowly backwards, not prolonging his prayer, lest the people who waited without should feel alarmed. When he came out, he pronounced the blessing recorded in Numbers vi. 24-26. Zacharias' inability to pronounce the blessing showed the people that he had seen a vision.

### *Twenty-seventh Week—Fourth Day.*

THE VISION.—LUKE I. 5-25.

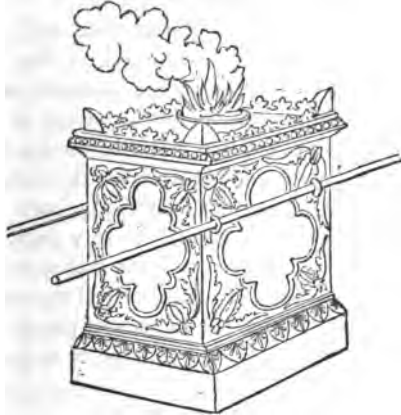
AND what had Zacharias seen in the temple ?

The dumbness with which he was smitten did not necessarily preclude him from making known the particulars in writing ; and the eagerness of both priests and people to learn what had taken place, probably urged him to an early disclosure. Indeed, he must himself have felt it due to them to make known at the earliest moment the glorious tidings which had been entrusted to him ; and the prediction involved might seem to be shorn of some of its evidencing power, if not disclosed before the signs of fulfilment appeared.

But still, what was it he had seen ?

An angel standing on the right side of the altar.

The altar of incense stood close by the veil which divided the holy place from the most holy ; on the north stood the table of shewbread, on the south the golden candlestick ; and as the priest entered with his face to the west, the angel must have stood to the north, or near the table of shewbread. Whether the angel was already visible when Zacharias came in, or afterwards suddenly appeared, has been questioned. It seems to us likely that the angel did not appear until *after* the



priest had performed his usual sacerdotal duties. For this there are two reasons : one, that the prior appearance of the angel would have discomposed the aged priest, if not disabled him for the discharge of his duties ; and the other, that the angel distinctly announced his mission to be an answer to prayer, which declaration would have come with tenfold emphasis *after* the incense, embodying the prayers of the people, had been offered.

Zacharias was much terrified when he beheld the angel, anticipating from him rather harm than good. Besides, the idea of an angelic visitant, so familiar to this people in their early history, had from disuse become a strange matter to them. In

the *presence* of angels they believed in the fullest extent; but of their *manifested* presence, there had long ceased to be any authentic examples. The actual appearance of an angel was therefore a more signal and alarming event than it might have seemed in earlier times. The trouble of the good old priest was so manifest, that the heavenly messenger hastened to relieve his fears. 'Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard!' What prayer? From what follows—that his wife Elisabeth shall bear a son, to be called John—it has been thought that the reference is to the prayer which he is likely to have frequently offered, that he might not go down childless to the grave. But, on the other hand, the time and place of the angel's manifestation being considered, it has appeared to many that the allusion is rather to the national prayer, offered by him in his ministerial capacity for the advent of the Messiah. For the angel goes on to explain that this son was his appointed harbinger. Thus laying the stress upon the fact of the Messiah's coming, rather than on a son being born to Zacharias—a secondary consideration, though a very important one to him. We incline to this view; and the rather so, as the sheer incredulity with which the old man received the announcement, as of a thing scarcely within the bounds of physical possibility, would suggest that he had ceased to hope or to pray for such a blessing.

The angel went on to tell him that this son, who, like Samson, was to be consecrated to God as a Nazarite from the womb, was appointed to raise the minds of the people to vital righteousness, and thereby prepare the way for the One mightier than he, whom it was his vocation to announce. Further, to rebuke Zacharias for the incredulity he had ventured to express, as well as to be a sign to himself and others, he was to be afflicted with dumbness till that of which he doubted was actually fulfilled.

It will hardly admit of question that this dumbness disqualified him for the exercise of his priestly office, at least as to the offering of incense; and we are not to infer the contrary from his remaining to the end of the week, when his 'course' com-

pleted its services ; for, according to the explanation yesterday given, his actual service was limited to the day on which the angel appeared to him.

At the end of the week Zacharias left Jerusalem, and returned to his usual abode in the southern part ('the hill country') of Judea. This is generally thought to have been Hebron, which was originally a Levitical city. The priestly families did not indeed resume the exclusive occupation of the old sacerdotal cities after the return from the captivity ; but the mere fact would naturally lead them to settle down by preference in those towns. Yet, as there seems no reason why Hebron should not be named in the subsequent reference (verse 39), to 'a city of Juda,' if it had been the city of John's birth, it has been supposed by many learned men, after Reland, that the right reading is Juta, or Juttah, which is mentioned in Josh. xv. 55, xxi. 16, as a city of the priests in the mountains of Judah, south of Hebron. This place still subsists under the name of Yutta, having the appearance of a large modern Mohammedan town, on a low eminence, with trees around. We owe this information to Dr. Robinson, who passed it at some distance, and whose guide informed him that there were found here old foundations and walls.

The promise made to Zacharias now began to be accomplished ; and during the first five months of her pregnancy, his good old wife Elisabeth, instead of gadding about to call all her neighbours to rejoice with her over the prospects of maternity which opened to her, kept herself closely secluded, either to avoid the curious inquiries of her neighbours in these jealous and perilous times, or because she deemed a devotional and thankful retirement best suited to her condition, as the expectant mother of a son so sacredly set apart for a holy life, and for high and honoured duties.

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The interpretation of the words, 'Thy prayer is heard,' advocated by Dr. Kitto, does not seem to me to accord either with the expression in the Greek, or with the scope of the context. The words ought to be translated, 'Thy prayer *has been heard.*' They

imply that, in days long past, he had prayed for a child ; but that, as time rolled on, and old age approached, the bright hopes and earnest longing prayers of manhood had gradually given way to settled sorrow, and pious, silent resignation. He had become, as he pathetically states in verse 18, ‘an old man,’ and his wife was ‘well stricken in years.’ Yet his prayers had been heard ; and they were graciously answered, as many a prayer is answered still, in God’s time and manner, and not in that of the suppliant.

### *Twenty-seventh Week—Fifth Day.*

GABRIEL.—LUKE I. 26.

THE angel who brought to Zacharias ‘these glad tidings,’ disclosed to him his name : ‘I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.’

We have heard of this angel before ; and we lose something unless we look back to the circumstances with which he was previously connected. This, then, was the same angel who appeared to Daniel, to explain to him the time that was to elapse until the coming of the Messiah ; of Him who was ‘to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.’ Dan. ix. 21–27. This being the case, we at once see the special and emphatic *fitness* that the same angel should be employed to announce the near accomplishment of that which he had so long ago predicted ; and as the prophecy in question was at this time deeply studied by the Jews, and, indeed, led them to entertain the belief that the time of the Messiah was then close at hand, we may understand the emphasis and reassuring significance of the information that he was the same angel through whom the ancient announcement had been made, and the authority which this fact would give to his present intimation in the eyes of the people when these circumstances transpired. Hence, we may be sure that when Zacharias came to describe these circumstances fully, he did not fail to give due prominence to the fact, that the same angel Gabriel, who had formerly announced

the time of the Messiah to Daniel, was he who had now appeared to make known the completion of that time to himself. Angels have feelings; and it was doubtless a gratification to Gabriel to be employed on a message verifying the prediction which had in old time been given by himself; and it may have been partly in regard to this gratification to him, that his and our gracious Lord entrusted him with this mission. Nor this only. For it is the same angel who was sent a few months later, to announce the birth of the Messiah himself, as now of his harbinger. The same considerations apply to both transactions. In connection with them the name of Gabriel was a name of power, in consequence of his former revelations to the prophet Daniel.

This is all we authentically know of Gabriel; but then his repeated appearances, and the fact that he alone of the angels conspicuously appears *by name* in the New Testament, have rendered his name more familiar to us than that of any other angel. In fact, there is only one other whose name is given in *canonical* Scripture; and that is Michael, who is described in Dan. x. as 'one of the chief princes,' and as having special charge of the affairs of the Jewish nation. In Jude 9, the same angel is introduced as disputing with Satan about the body of Moses; and in Rev. xii. 7-9, Michael and his angels are represented as warring with Satan and his angels in the upper regions, from which the latter are cast down to the earth. On the authority of the first of these texts, the Jews made Michael not only one of 'the seven archangels' (of whom Gabriel is held to be one), but the chief of them; and on the authority of all these texts taken together, Christian interpreters have been disposed to acquiesce in this conclusion.

But although these two only are named in the canonical books, several other names occur in those of the Apocrypha, and have been adopted into the popular angelology. One called Raphael is very conspicuous in the singular story of Tobit; from which circumstance—from the frequent use of his name by the old diviners by crystals and the like, who professed to act much under the influence of angels,—and, with us, from



the conspicuous part Milton has assigned to him in *Paradise Lost*, as the friendly instructor of Adam—the name of Raphael has become almost as familiar as the names of Gabriel and Michael.

The books of Esdras furnish us with the additional names of Uriel, of Jiremiel an archangel, and also of Sealthiel. The Jewish rabbinical writers, however, give us many more, which they pretend to have received by tradition from the fathers. Indeed, their cabalistical writers inform us that the names of the angels are contained mystically in the Scriptures, and that 'the wise' can discern them there.

On the other hand, there are those who doubt that angels have any proper names. This is the view taken by a writer who has devoted a volume to the subject of angels.<sup>1</sup> He argues, that although names do appear in Scripture, 'they are names given those angels, not as their proper names, but as names that suited such messages as they were then sent on, and did as properly belong to other angels when sent on like messages. GABRIEL signifieth "the Power or Strength of God,"—and the angel is so called when sent to declare the great power of God. MICHAEL signifieth, "Who is like unto God?"—that is, so strong as to be able to contend with Him ; and so the angel is called when sent to fight for God's people, and to oppose the devil and his angels. In like manner, that angel mentioned in Tobit is called RAPHAEL, because he was "sent to heal" (as you read in that history), and so the word signifies. These were not names perpetually belonging to those individual angels, as their proper names, but names given them as appearing in certain ministeries suiting such names. And when any other angels are sent about the like services, those names do as properly belong to them.'

This is an ingenious view, and entitled to consideration. It even obviates some difficulties ; but, upon the whole, there

<sup>1</sup> ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ : *Or a Discourse of Angels.* London : Printed for Thomas Parkhurst at the Bible and Three Crowns, 1701. The learned author's name does not appear in any part of the work ; but our copy is lettered SAUNDERS' ANGELS.

seem to us grounds of preference for the opinion, that the names given are actually proper names. Without this, indeed, the significance we have deduced from the employment of Gabriel on the present occasion would fall to the ground.

We may add, that the name of Gabriel, by reason of the prominent manner in which Mohammed brings him forward in the Koran, is now more familiar than that of any other angel in the Moslem East. Indeed, Mohammed pretended that Gabriel was the medium of his intercourse with heaven, and brought to him the revelations which the Koran embodied ; and it was Gabriel who conducted him to heaven, mounted on the marvellous beast Al-Borak. Mohammedans believe, as we do, that this angel announced the birth of Christ to Mary his mother ; and, curiously enough, they claim his special patronage of the Moslems, 'on the ground that he served the Messiah, whom they reverence,<sup>1</sup> and was an enemy of the Jews, who rejected Him. They call him 'the faithful Spirit ;' while the Persians, by a metaphor strange to us, but significant to them, designate him as 'the Peacock of Paradise ;' and in the second chapter of the Koran we read, 'Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel shall be confounded.' The Jews they suppose to be his enemies, on account of the part he took in introducing the Messiah ; and he their adversary, on account of their rejection of Jesus.

### *Twenty-seventh Week—Sixth Day.*

NAZARETH.—LUKE I. 26.

Six months had not expired before the angel Gabriel again made his appearance ; and this time his visit was to Nazareth.

This was an obscure place in Galilee, which owes all its renown to the event which the angel went thither to announce.

<sup>1</sup> The Moslems reverence Jesus as a great prophet, but abhor his being accounted the Son of God, which they regard as the error of his followers, and not as his own claim.

It is not mentioned in the Old Testament ; nor does its name occur in the ancient non-scriptural writings of the Jews, except to mention it as the birthplace of Jesus. Yet it had a sort of notoriety ; in fact it was infamous. This we gather from the Gospel itself ; for, when Nathanael was told that He ‘ of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write,’ was of that place, ‘ Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ was the prompt and contemptuous answer, showing more expressively than any detailed explanation the evil fame which Nazareth had acquired.

What was the character of this ill-repute we know not precisely. Perhaps it merely showed the sovereign contempt with which the people of Jerusalem and Judea looked down upon all the inhabitants of Galilee, in which district Nazareth was situated. As the public morality of the country was in that age low, the stigma was probably not one of moral degradation, but perhaps such as resulted from the turbulent and refractory character which the inhabitants bear to this day.

Nazareth lay about six miles north-west from Mount Tabor, and about twenty-five miles from the south end of the Lake of Tiberias, and was within the ancient limits of the tribe of Zebulun. The place is still, as probably it was at the time of the angel’s visit, a large village, or small town, situated upon the slope of one of the hills which enclose a hollow or valley. This vale, which is about a mile long by half a mile broad, resembles a circular basin shut in by mountains. It is a pleasant spot, and one might almost think that the fifteen mountains which enclose it had risen around to guard it from intrusion. It is as a rich and beautiful field in the midst of barren mountains, abounding in fig-trees, and showing many small gardens with hedges of the prickly pear, while the rich dense grass affords an abundant and refreshing pasture. The town stands at the left or western end of the vale, and commands a view over the whole of its beautiful extent. The town itself, as beheld from the valley, or from the enclosing hill, is very picturesque, backed as it is by high cliffs, and approached from under the shade of spreading oaks, with substantial-

looking houses of stone, the square massive walls of the church and monastery, and the graceful minarets of two mosques,



interspersed with, and here and there overtopped by, the tall spiral forms of the dark green cypress-trees.

The stone-built houses are mostly two storeys high, and flat-roofed. The streets are necessarily steep from the inclination of the hill, narrow from local custom, and dirty from the looseness of the soil. The convent just mentioned belongs to the Latins (Roman Catholics), and is one of the largest and most commodious in the Levant. The Church of the Annunciation, connected with it, is also the finest in Syria, after that of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The Greeks, too, have a church, and the Maronites have another—two-thirds of the inhabitants (2000 out of 3000) being Christians. The Moslem mosque is, however, the most conspicuous building, sending its tall minarets, surmounted by the crescent, aloft from the centre of the town, as if to announce the triumph of its dominion to those approaching from afar.

Such, then, was the spot to which the angel repaired ; and it was amid these scenes that our Lord spent the first thirty years of his life on earth. ‘The principal outlines of the picture cannot have greatly varied since it was the earthly residence of Him “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich ;” thirty years sanctifying it with his presence, as He now fills all worlds with his essential glory.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BELDAM, *Italy and the East*, ii. 177.

A distinguished German, who travelled for the purpose of seeking and examining manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, has given us a very interesting record of the impressions made upon his mind at Nazareth. It was difficult, he remarks, to find the most beautiful view of Nazareth, as it had from all parts a picturesque and beautiful effect. He delighted most, however, in the view which he obtained in wandering over the eastern heights opposite the city. 'Two thousand years,' he observes, 'may possibly have changed much; but as much as I saw to-day must also have been spread out before the divine eye of the son of Joseph of Nazareth. How often may He not have wandered where I was now wandering; his sacred heart full of his great future work; full of the conception of his doctrine, which, from the narrow mountains of his little home, should fill all the mountains and all the seas of the earth, and every land and every heart!'

He goes on to inform us, that opposite to him, on the west, lay the crown of all the heights about Nazareth. From the Turkish sepulchre upon it, it is called by the name of the Moslem saint or prophet (Neby) Ismael. Thither he went, knowing beforehand what splendour awaited him, especially as that day the sky was almost cloudless, and the atmosphere perfectly clear.

'A few months before, I had stood upon the loftiest pyramid, with the desert, the Nile, and Cairo at my feet. I had since stood upon Sinai, the majestic mountain of the Lord, and had thence petitioned Heaven itself, like a bosom friend. From the minaret at the summit of the Mount of Olives, I had viewed at once the Holy City, with Bethlehem's heights and the mountains of Samaria, the wonderful sea of Sodom, and the mountains of Moab; yet to-day I felt as a child who had yet seen nothing but his own home, and knew nothing of the world. I was thus overwhelmed by the view from Neby Ismael, which crowns the heights of Nazareth. I looked towards Tabor in the east; the lesser Hermon and Gilboa peered upwards in its vicinity, and guided me to the mountains of Samaria in the south. Thence I looked towards the west, and beheld the

forelands of Carmel, and in the blue distance Carmel itself. Amid all these mountain heights the broad plains of Esdraelon reposed before me, as if encircled by eternal walls. But beyond Carmel, to its left as well as to its right, lay, like a festal day in glittering beauty, the mirror of the Mediterranean. In the north a second extensive plain spread forth, with Canna, the little town of the marriage, and the "Horns of Hattin," where the army of Saladin trampled under foot all the conquests of the Crusaders. In the north-east, lastly, shone down, like a divine eye, behind desert groups of mountains, the summit of the great Hermon, enveloped in its eternal snows; and, withdrawing my gaze from those distant scenes, I looked down upon Nazareth, which clung, like a darling child, to the hill above which I stood.

'What were the feelings of my soul during this survey? The admiration and devotion then felt have no words to express them; but a psalm of the inspired David was rushing to the lips, to resound to the depths of the unfathomable ocean, and to ascend to the snowy summit of Hermon. What may this watch-tower have been to our Saviour? A symbol of his kingdom upon earth—of the gospel of redemption, as it embraced heaven, earth, and seas with the arms of maternal affection; as it compressed together both the past and future, in the one great hour upon Golgotha. The snow of Hermon looks like the grey head of Time—like the past; the sea, pregnant with mystery, like the future. Between both reposes the present, this dew-drop, reflecting infinitely rich images from the rays of the morning sun.'

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The whole history of Nazareth, sacred and civil, clusters round one event, known throughout the Christian world as the ANNUNCIATION. Before that event, its name was unknown; but since, it has become a household word throughout Christendom. To the thoughtful Christian, Nazareth—the home of Christ's boyhood, the scene of his domestic relations, his private life, his mental development, his prayers, his communion with the Father, his early labours—possesses a far greater charm, a far more intense interest,

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in the East.* By CONSTANTINE TISCHENDORFF. London, 1847.

than the annunciation could ever of itself have conferred. Yet there is little said about Nazareth in the Gospels; and the references to its site and features are only incidental. They are worthy of note, however; and it may be well to group them in this place. 'The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin.' 'From Galilee, out of Nazareth,' Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed. On coming up out of Egypt, 'they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.' From the temple, Jesus went down with his parents to Nazareth, 'and was subject unto them.' When entering on his public career, 'Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.' Again, 'He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.' The reception He then met with shows only too plainly the general character of the Nazarenes, and shows too that there was some foundation for Nathanael's question, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' His fellow-townsmen not only rejected, but they sought to murder Him; then He left Nazareth, and went down to Capernaum, which was henceforth called 'his own city.' At a still later period, He visited Nazareth, and taught in the synagogue with such startling effect, that all were astonished; and yet they cried in derision, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? . . . and they were offended at Him.' Nazareth is not again mentioned in sacred history. It seems to have attracted no notice until the establishment of the Christian religion in the reign of Constantine. Not a single pilgrim appears to have visited it till about the sixth century. In the seventh century, it contained two churches: one built over the fountain; the other over the house of Mary, on the site of the present Latin convent. During the Crusades, its great church was rebuilt and richly endowed, and the town was made the seat of a bishop.<sup>1</sup>

### *Twenty-seventh Week—Seventh Day.*

THE ANNUNCIATION.—LUKE I. 26-38.

IF there be joy in heaven—joy among the angels of God—over one sinner that repenteth, we may be sure that it was not with indifference, but with glad songs of praise and shouts of

<sup>1</sup> See KITTO'S *Cyclopaedia of Bib. Lit.*, 3d edition, s. v. NAZARETH.

adoring joy, that the heavenly hosts beheld the great archangel depart to revisit earth, to bear hither the tidings of great joy, so long looked for, and desired so long.

This high rank of the ambassador evinced the grandeur and importance of the mission with which he was charged. The angels knew it ; they knew that it affected deeply the most essential interests of the race of man, not only in time, but in eternity. But to man himself, seeing no more than its outer aspect, the immediate result would have seemed inadequate and disappointing. He went not to any of the great nations of the earth ; he visited not any of her mighty cities—not Rome, not Athens, not Alexandria, not Antioch, not even Jerusalem : his mission was to a small and dependent country—to the most despised district of that country—to the most ill-reputed town of that district. Ay, but surely some great king had his sojourn there, or some great prophet, or some holy priest, or some sage renowned for wisdom ? Not so. His mission was to one of the humblest abodes of that humble place ; and not to prince, to prophet, to priest, or to philosopher, but to a poor maiden of Nazareth, named Mary—which is the same name as Miriam—betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph.

It is no marvel that the damsel was startled when the angel presented himself before her in her humble home. Although women were then—at least among the Jews—much less secluded than is at present the case in the East, it was not usual for a woman to be spoken to, or pointedly noticed in any way, by a stranger, or by any but a very near relative. If for a damsel to be accosted anywhere by a man unknown were a strange and startling circumstance, much more to be addressed by an angel, and suddenly, in her own house. The form and mien of the angel were doubtless human ; and we do not, with the painters of pictures, suppose that he exhibited that outward splendour which is usually ascribed to him, and which could only have added to Mary's dismay and apprehension. Yet, although his semblance was human, we doubt not there was that in his air, and in the manner of his appearance, which



must have suggested that he was a being not of earth ; and if she had doubted, his words must soon have disclosed that he was a ministering spirit who stood before her. It may well be, however, that he manifested such glorious peculiarities as at once made him known ; and if the angel who descended from heaven to roll back the stone from the door of our Lord's tomb had 'his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,' there was no reason why the great angel who came now to announce tidings of such signal importance should exhibit a less distinguished form, unless it be, that in the case mentioned, the angel assumed the lightning for the purpose of striking terror into the hostile watchers of the tomb. This is the more likely, as, when he was seen soon after by the faithful women who came to the sepulchre, he seems to have laid aside the lightning of his countenance, and appeared only as 'a young man clothed in a long white garment.' As to the wings, which the painters bestow so bountifully, we do not believe in them, notwithstanding that the Romish Church claims to possess a feather which dropped from Gabriel's wing on this occasion—a very pretty *pink* feather, the real source of which naturalists have not yet, we believe, been able to determine.

The announcement of this heavenly visitant to the lowly damsel of Nazareth, hailed her as the one of all women most favoured, who had been singled out for that honour—so long coveted by successive generations of Hebrew women—of giving birth to the Messiah. The language in which this was expressed was very plain to her, familiar as she manifestly was with the prophecies concerning Him, and with the expectations which her people entertained. And, indeed, the general expectation that the Messiah was then speedily to appear, must in some measure have diminished her surprise at the purport of the communication. In fact, her astonishment that the choice had fallen on herself may have been less even to her lowly mind than is usually supposed, for the hope was as open to her as to any other Hebrew woman ; and her evident study of the prophecies concerning Christ, evinces the interest

she had taken in the matter ; while she must have known that she—however obscure her lot—was one of the not large number of women to whom the later prophecies had limited that hope. The keen apprehension with which she seized the full meaning of the angel's intimations, well shows her preparedness of mind. That the Son thus announced should be 'great ;' that He should 'be called the Son of the Highest ;' that 'the Lord God should give unto Him the throne of his father David ;' and that 'He should reign over the house of Jacob for ever ;'—nothing of all this astonished her. But there is one thing that did. She understood rightly that all which has now been mentioned was then to take place ; but how she should become a mother, while not yet fully married, perplexed her. And observe, she had no incredulity as to the fact itself, but was at a loss to know in what manner it could be accomplished. She said not, '*Can* this thing be ?' but, '*How shall* this be ?' Like all her people, she supposed, as the Jews still suppose, that there would not be anything miraculous in the birth of Christ ; but that He should be born in ordinary course, in the house of David. She now therefore learned, and learned it with surprise, that the functions which belonged to Him, higher than the Jews in general recognised, required that He should take man's nature on Him in such a manner as should evince his heavenly origin. The idea was new ; but when reminded that the power of the Highest was sufficient to accomplish this, she needed nothing more to satisfy her, although the angel, to let her see that with God nothing is impossible, disclosed to her the strange fact, that her aged cousin Elisabeth had conceived a son in her old age, and that it was now the sixth month with her who was called barren.

This was enough for Mary. To know that the Lord would accomplish it, satisfied her that it could be done, though contrary to all thought and experience. She questions no further *how*. It was his will, his purpose ; and it would be accomplished in the way that seemed best to Him. That she, who was personally interested in the matter, questioned so little concerning the mode in which this prodigy was to be effected,

is a fair lesson to our faith. ‘The faithful heart, when once it understands the good pleasure of God, argues no more, but sweetly sets itself in a quiet expectation. “Behold the servant of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.”’

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Though in humble life, and betrothed to one of her own class, Mary was of royal blood. She appears to have been in her house, probably at prayer, when Gabriel addressed her. The splendour of his appearance, though it must have astonished her, did not discompose her calm, trustful mind. She was conscious, before this time, that God was with her, and she therefore felt that she had no cause to fear his messenger. But the wondrous salutation troubled her. She knew not why she should be addressed with such homage by an angel. She could not comprehend the message besides. There was something in it beyond the reach of her mind.

Seeing by divine intuition the inward working of her soul, responding to her anxious though silent desire, Gabriel again addressed her. The revelation then made—the most wonderful ever made to mortal—was received with that meek humility and implicit faith which characterized the virgin of Nazareth. Unlike Zacharias, she never questioned the truth of the announcement. The learned priest and simple village maiden stand out thus in striking contrast. Still it was too mysterious, too profound, for her intellect to fathom. It even seemed, upon reflection, to be impossible as well as incomprehensible. Hence she asked, not in unbelief, but for explanation, ‘How shall this be?’ She takes for granted that it will be, because God’s angel said it. She only inquires how, in what way that would be brought about, which, in the order of nature, was an impossibility.

An answer was given with a clearness, a delicacy, and at the same time a sublimity, which showed its emanation from a source infinitely wise and holy. The heavenly origin of the promised Son is stated, his divinity is anew affirmed. Now, also, for the first time, the advent of the Forerunner is announced to Mary. And lest, in the feebleness of the human intellect, or the inherent unbelief of the human heart, the possibility of this glorious fact might still cast a shadow of doubt, Gabriel closed his message by a declaration sufficient to account for it—sufficient also to answer the cavils and objections of sceptics in every age: ‘*With God nothing shall be impossible.*’ These words were spoken, perhaps,

not so much in reply to Mary's question, as to the internal wonderings of her thoughtful mind, and the prospective desires of God's people.

The glorious truth thus revealed to Mary, and the unparalleled dignity conferred upon her, gave rise to no feelings of pride. She seems never to have thought of self. Her meekness and humility were, if possible, greater after than before the annunciation. The honours since heaped upon her memory and her name, and the homage paid at her ten thousand shrines, would have been as repugnant to the feelings of the humble virgin of Nazareth as they are opposed to the revelation of God. With meek submission, with holy resignation to the divine will, with faith implicit in divine power and protection, Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.' There was a moral heroism in this which may not at first sight be apparent. By the Mosaic law, infidelity on the part of a betrothed female was a capital offence. Mary knew this. She knew also that, though the law might remain a dead letter, yet her honour, dear as life itself, was at stake ; and that any declaration of the truth from her lips, even to her destined husband, would be vain. None would believe her. Any statement she might make would be likely to lay her open to the still graver charge of blasphemy. Yet, with a faith unparalleled, she left the whole—her honour, her life, her all—in God's hands.



## Twenty-eighth Week—First Day.

MARY'S VISIT TO ELISABETH.—LUKE I. 39-56.

THE intimation which the angel had given respecting Elisabeth greatly impressed the mind of Mary, and created a strong desire to visit and confer with that aged relative, under the very peculiar circumstances in which she was placed. There were grounds on which she might suspect the actual relation between these extraordinary circumstances. She could not but know what had happened to Zacharias in the temple; and if, as would seem probable from her not being already apprised of the fact, the particulars of the vision had not yet become equally notorious, the information given by the angel pointed, as coming from him, to a connecting link which she would be anxious to trace more fully.

They were separated by the extent of more than half the kingdom; and we know not precisely how the journey was made, except that we are quite of opinion that it was *not* in company with her affianced husband, although the painters so represent it. This would have been adverse to the usages of the time and people. But the journey might, nevertheless, be easily accomplished. Our impression is, that she went in a party of friends and neighbours to one of the festivals at Jerusalem; of which party Joseph, as well as her own immediate relatives, may have been. At Jerusalem she would meet Zacharias, who, as a priest, would certainly attend the festival, even if not on actual duty; and having made known her wish to him, would accompany him when he returned to his home.

When she arrived, she was hailed by Elisabeth with a most unexpected greeting. Much had that aged lady pondered who might be that one of David's line, greater than her own great son, whose path *he* was to prepare. And when this lowly

daughter of that royal house approached her, the singular emotion evinced by the babe in her womb, which a light from heaven enabled her rightly to interpret, convinced her that she whose womb contained that Mighty One stood there before her. To this conviction she gave instant utterance, in the joyful salutation, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' Both had been highly favoured—but Mary most; and recognising in her the mother of Him who was the hope of Israel, this exalted her young relative so highly in her eyes, that, although in actual condition of life superior, Elisabeth felt her comparative lowliness. The lesser visits the greater; but here the greater—the mother of her Lord—that unborn Lord, to whose presence her own unborn son renders homage, visits her. One cannot but compare her declaration with that of her son, when Jesus came to be baptized of him in the Jordan: '*I have need to be baptized of THEE, and comest THOU to me!*'

This ample and cheering recognition, on the part of one whose counsel she had come to seek, and who could not yet have known what had happened to her, stirred the depths of Mary's soul within her, and caused her to give vent to her feelings in a beautiful hymn of thankfulness and triumph. It is full of phrases and images drawn from the Old Testament, and proving how well she had stored her mind from that holy book. Especially does it resemble the song of Hannah, showing that her mind naturally reverted to it, as affording much that was suited to her own condition, and that gave adequate expression to her own feelings.

She declares her joy, that from her low estate she had been exalted to this high honour. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' And why? not for what she had done, but for what had been done to her; not for her own perfections and excellencies, but because the Lord had given to her the happiness for which so many sighed

—because his favour had distinguished her. She was a pious and virtuous woman, endowed with that lowliness of mind which God delights to honour. But she thought not, nor did the angel or Elisabeth think, that it was on this account she had been chosen to honour. She felt that she was a sinner before God, and knew that she needed a Saviour. She dreamt not therefore of her deservings, but of the favour bestowed upon her. This is the burden of all the utterances that are heard in connection with this great matter. The angel hails her as one ‘highly favoured;’ and all her blessedness she herself claims to hold by no other tenure than does the sinner who writes, and the sinner who reads, these lines. It is because the Lord ‘hath regarded her low estate.’ It is because ‘He that is mighty hath done to her great things; and holy is his name.’ It is the Lord’s doing, marvellous in her eyes, and she gives to Him all the glory of it. If she had set herself down to find out what good thing there was in her, for which she had been thus honoured, she would have shown herself little worthy of the distinction. But she had no such thought: it is all what He has done for her and to her that engages her thoughts. ‘It is not in me—it is in Thee,’ is the burden of all she says and all she feels.

From her part in this great blessing, her mind reaches forth to its infinite and enduring concernment to the world. She sees that through this event, with which her name is for ever connected, the Lord’s mercy will come ‘on them that fear Him from generation to generation.’

In many past times had God manifested his almightiness; but never so signally as now had He ‘shown strength with his arm,’ scattering the proud Jews who, in the imagination of their hearts, were looking anxiously among the great families of Judah for a Messiah to lead them to earthly glories, and to the conquest of nations, and little thinking that He was to appear from among the humblest dwellings of the humblest town in Galilee. But this agreed with his ancient dealings with the house of David, when He had ‘put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree;’ and still when the

hungry come as suppliants to be fed by Him, their hands are filled with good things—the hungry, to whom bread is life, are fed—while those who come with pretensive claims, as already rich, and who ask without the sharp earnestness of real hunger, are ‘sent empty away.’

Having glanced at the Lord’s goodness to herself individually, at his goodness to all men, she proceeded to celebrate his special goodness to his people,—a man at last appearing for the help of his people, according to the ancient promises made to the patriarchs.

Whether she bore in mind that these promises were of larger scope than was usually given to them in her time, and that in Abraham—not only his natural, but his spiritual descendants—‘all the families of the earth’ were to be blessed, has been questioned. Some contend that she took the narrow Jewish view of the Messiah’s functions; while others allege that her vision, spiritually enlightened, was enabled to see the utmost consequences of the Messiah’s advent. It is hard to say. Most of her words will fall in with either interpretation, and some of them lean strongly to the peculiar Jewish view of the Messiah’s functions. There is no reason why Mary should be expected to have clearer views than the apostles, who did not till after the resurrection entertain any clear notions of their Lord’s spiritual kingdom. It is reasonable to suppose that her knowledge, like theirs, was progressively acquired. It is true she was taught by an angel; but the disciples, who were taught by Christ himself, continued to retain substantially the common Jewish notions of the kingdom He was to establish over the earth, expecting He would restore the house of David, and make the Israelites the ruling people of the world.

However interpreted in this respect, the language used by Mary is that of a humble, thankful, and pious heart, praising God in very beautiful poetry; for the piece is poetry, and, as usually defined, almost the only poetry that the New Testament contains.

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The journey from Nazareth to the town of Juda, ‘in the hill  
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country,' was nearly a hundred miles, and must have occupied four days at least. The route lay down the centre of Palestine, across the corn-fields and meadows of Esdraelon, through the picturesque vales and glens of Ephraim, over the rocky hills of Benjamin, past Bethel and Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron, and many another spot immortalized by the exploits of Mary's royal ancestors. Mary passed them by unheeded; other and higher thoughts filled her anxious breast. What divine communication had been made to Elisabeth? Would it throw any additional light upon her own state, or upon the mission and destiny of her promised Son? Was any new revelation in store for herself? Would the divinely suggested conference between her and Elisabeth bring out any important truth? Such, doubtless, were the thoughts that filled Mary's mind, as with eager step she pressed forward to Juda.

The meeting was a most remarkable one. Personally, Mary was probably unknown to her aged relative. Living far apart, they had perhaps never met before. But the very moment her salutation fell upon Elisabeth's ear, by divine intuition she knew her. No word of explanation or introduction was needed. The Spirit of God, descending upon both, taught them that they were united by ties closer and holier than those of kindred.

When Elisabeth had finished her inspired song of welcome, Mary caught up the heavenly fire, and, in language as sublime as ever fell from the lips of Hebrew prophet, pronounced her 'Magnificat.' It is no mere celebration of her own honour. It is a grateful acknowledgment of God's mercy and truth in fulfilling his promise of a Saviour. In this noble ode Mary appears gifted with the spirit of prophecy. The future stands unveiled before her; and she sees, in distant but glorious perspective, the successful establishment of her Son's kingdom.

Nothing is said of Zacharias. He was no doubt present at the meeting. He saw the tender embrace and the beaming faces. He saw the respectful salute given by his wife to the youthful stranger; but his bodily affliction kept him, for a time at least, from understanding or participating in their common joy. Mary abode with them three months. It was a long visit for a betrothed maiden. In this, as in other things, she was probably following a divine monitor. In the greatest joy, as well as in the deepest sorrow, the heart yearns for sympathy. These two favoured women could enter fully into each other's feelings, and cares, and hopes.

None but themselves could understand their mental state, or fathom their deep and anxious thoughts. Mutual converse was thus, humanly speaking, requisite for their happiness. Living apart, each must have been, in inner life and feeling, alienated from all human society. But when together, they could speak freely of their intercourse with Heaven. They could study, as they never had done before, the revelations made in God's word; and with hearts united, they could pray that still more and more of light divine might be shed upon the Messianic prophecies, in which they now felt the deepest personal interest.

### Twenty-eighth Week—Second Day.

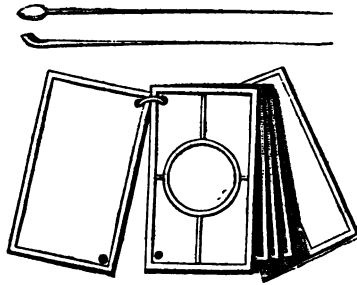
BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.—LUKE I. 57-59.

MARY remained three months with her aged friend; and then, the time of Elisabeth's confinement drawing nigh, she returned to her home, probably because their domestic arrangements, or some other cause, rendered it unfit or inconvenient that she should reside longer with them.

When the time was fully come, Elisabeth gave birth to a son; and her friends and neighbours rejoiced with her, that the Lord had shown her mercy in delivering her from the reproach of childlessness. On the eighth day the child was, according to the law, to be circumcised; and then also, according to custom, to receive his name.

It was proposed by those present to call him Zacharias, 'after the name of his father.' We observe it stated by some, that it was usual for the eldest son to be called after his father. But, on the contrary, it was not only not usual, but exceedingly rare—so rare, that we do not recollect any instance in Scripture. In fact, as the Jews had no proper surnames, and the name of the father formed a distinctive addition to that of the son, as 'David the son of Jesse,' it would have been exceedingly awkward and inconvenient that the two should have the same name, in a place where there might be a score of persons bearing that name, and distinguishable from one another only by

the combination of the father's name with their own. It was, however, done sometimes, and under special circumstances. And the very remarkable circumstances under which the parentage of this child was given to an aged couple, probably suggested this course. Zacharias, it will be recollected, was still dumb ; but Elisabeth, to whom he had assuredly ere this imparted all the particulars of his vision in writing, insisted that the child should be called John, being the name the angel had assigned to him. The persons present, not being aware of the cause, were amazed at this, and objected that there was none of the family that bore this name,—an objection which shows that it was customary with the Jews, as it is with us, to name children after forefathers or living members of the family who were held in honour, or to whom it was desired to pay a compliment. Sometimes names were given after persons not of the family, who were held in high esteem ; and by this time, the custom of giving, at circumcision, names selected with a reference to their significance, seems to have nearly passed away.



In this perplexity an appeal was made to the father ; and he, asking by signs for ' a writing-tablet,' wrote : ' His name is John.' The writing-tablet, or tablet, was used much like a slate for temporary use. Sometimes it was of lead, the writing on which was formed with a bodkin or stylus, and could be beaten out when no longer needed. Sometimes it was composed of a thin board covered with wax, on which also the characters were traced with a metal stylus ; and often it was merely a

small clean board, on which the writing was formed with chalk. Such boards are to this day used instead of slates in the common schools of Greece ; the writing being washed or scraped off, that the board may receive a succession of fresh lessons. This kind of tablet bears the very same name that the evangelist here gives to the writing-tablet for which Zacharias called. Sometimes these tablets were made up into books of three or four leaves, like our slate books.

At this confirmation by the father of the choice of name which the mother had indicated, 'they marvelled all.' But they marvelled more when Zacharias, whose mouth had been closed so long, began to speak ; and his first utterances were, as became him, to the praise of the Lord. These circumstances, and the words which the father uttered, were heeded with grave and surprised attention by those who were present ; and, taken in connection with the antecedent circumstances, which now, if not before, became publicly known, excited a great sensation in southern Judea, and led men to regard the child's career with solicitude, and to look for those further fulfilments of prophecy in the person of the Messiah with which his destiny seemed to be connected and bound up. Thus the infant son of Zacharias began 'to prepare the way' of the Lord, even before the latter had made his appearance in the world.

The utterance in which Zacharias, when 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' gave vent to his perceptions and convictions, is very remarkable, and, like the song of Mary, is clothed in a highly poetic diction, though more confined to the indication of simple facts. He very distinctly announces the separate stations and offices of his son, and of the yet unborn Messiah. For John is announced as the prophet of the Highest, who 'shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.' What follows seems, however, to show that Zacharias had not been led into the spiritualities of the kingdom which Christ was to set up, much, if at all, beyond the popular Jewish notions of the day. At least such notions are predominant with him ; for he apprehends that the *first* object of the Messiah's coming is, that the children of Israel 'should be saved from

their enemies, and from the hand of all that hate them ;' that they, ' being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, might serve Him without fear.' He does, however, ascribe to the Messiah a higher nature than the Jews expected for Him, having been doubtless led thereto by the communications of the angel to himself and to Mary. He saw that He was to be ' the day-spring from on high,' and that the approaching salvation which his son had to announce consisted in ' the remission of sins.' We are not disposed to take these large terms in the comparatively narrow and Jewish sense which some ascribe to them, for the terms that follow are as large as they well could be : the day-spring comes, not merely to meet current expectations, but ' to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.' This, in fact, would be the proto-evangel, were not the angel's intimation to Mary, ' Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins,' of still earlier date. In our view, it is full of gospel doctrine, except as regards the atonement, which has not yet been fully proclaimed. It represents the people as travellers, who, being overtaken by night, and, not knowing where they are, sit down in the darkness and wait for the morning light, that they may know what to do, and that the path of peace and safety may be disclosed.

Hitherto, therefore, the essential doctrine which we have learned is, that the Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, whose path the son of Zacharias is to prepare, is ' the Son of the Highest ;' that He comes to make the way of salvation known ; and that the way lies through Him : for it is He, and no other, who is to save his people from their sins. This is going very far beyond the popular notions of that day. The Jews believed that He would save them from their *enemies* ; but they now begin to be taught that their worst and most fatal enemies are their sins, and that it is from these enemies the Messiah comes to save them.

Twenty-eighth Week—Third Day.

THE PERPLEXITY.—MATTHEW I. 18—25.

THERE is no reason to suppose that the peculiar condition in which Mary stood was made known to her betrothed husband until after her return to Nazareth. Indeed, as it is clear that she paid this visit almost immediately after the announcement made to her by the angel, there was little opportunity or occasion for such a communication ; and it is quite likely that she particularly wished to consult the aged priest and his wife as to how she ought to proceed under circumstances so strange and alarming. Besides, perceiving the connection which existed between her case and that of Elisabeth, she would naturally wish to defer the communication until the birth of a son to Zacharias should, in this connection, afford its corroboration to her own recital. Some say that the disclosure was made because, on her return, her appearance excited the suspicion of Joseph ; but at a stage so early there is nothing to awaken a man's suspicion, and we doubt not the information was given as the result of her reflections, and of the advice she had received respecting the course which it became her to follow. Indeed, we are not reluctant to suppose that she may have been favoured with direction from heaven ; for if such direction was given to relieve Joseph from *his* perplexity, why not to relieve Mary from that under which *she* must have laboured ?

The true state of the case from the beginning was then frankly made known to him. He was much startled, and greatly disturbed. His emotions were not of joy. To be indeed the father of the Messiah had been a gladness to him, under the notions which, as a Jew, he entertained ; but to afford merely a nominal parentage to one for whom a heavenly origin was claimed, seemed a less distinguished honour. Indeed, this claim might have seemed to him to discredit the story which had been told him on the part of Mary ; for it is certain that the general, if not universal, expectation looked for no other

than a full human parentage for the Messiah in the line of David. That Joseph did disbelieve the account given him, cannot be affirmed. He may have had no more than doubts and misgivings, but such as one would not wish that his espoused should labour under. We may not blame him. It was a hard case. Unless so far as corroborated by what had happened to Elisabeth, there was no tangible evidence in the matter but that of Mary herself, the party mainly concerned ; and there are minds, if such were not his, to which the thought might occur, that the whole account had been invented to cover her dishonour. To repel this idea, rose his knowledge of her ingenuousness and truth, the purity of her sentiments and character, and, more than all, the reverent piety which must have rendered an invention like this a blasphemy impossible to her. Still, supposing he had that faith in her truth which compelled him to believe the strange account she had given, was he prepared to encounter

‘The world’s dread laugh,’

in taking to his home one who was in the way to become a mother before her marriage with him had been completed ?

Joseph was a good and pious man, fearful of doing wrong, and anxious to do right ; yet these things perplexed him, as he considered the question whether he should complete this marriage or not. His regard for Mary, and his trust in her, urged him one way ; his latent misgivings, and his regard for propriety, another ; and the result might have been doubtful, had not the Lord’s mercy interposed to guide him aright, in answer, doubtless, to the many prayers which he offered for that guidance.

But it is needful to define more exactly the position in which he stood.

It was customary among the Jews for an interval of ten or twelve months to elapse between the betrothal, or formal agreement to marry, and the actual marriage. But from the time of the betrothal the parties became, in the eye of the law, man and wife, and were so spoken of, although during the

interval there was no kind of direct intercourse between them, and even to be seen speaking together would have been regarded as a breach of decorum. These, however, were the usages of the higher classes, and were probably somewhat relaxed among persons of humbler condition in life, as is the case with the still more stringent regulations regarding the non-intercourse between men and women which at this day exist in the East, and which anciently imparted some colour to the freer customs of the Israelites. In fact, in regard to most nations, the usages in these matters, as far as historically known to us, are those of what is called good society, and become practically relaxed as we descend the scale of social existence; partly from the circumstances of humble life throwing friends and neighbours more under each other's observation, and partly from the impossibility of maintaining that seclusion exacted from, and only possible to, the wealthy and the great. Still, when such regulations do exist, they give the tone to the general sentiment of society; and we are willing to believe that the hesitation which Joseph felt, and which is creditable to the sturdy honour of his character, might have been less, had it been more in his power than usage sanctioned, to receive his impression of circumstances which concerned him so nearly from her own truthful lips, and from the eloquent glow of her ingenuous countenance, rather than in the cold abstractness of another's recital. For the *evidence* of the truth, however, it is well for us that he did hesitate, and felt the want of higher testimony than had yet been given to satisfy his mind.

So real and sacred in the eye of the law was the relation formed by betrothal, that a woman who proved unfaithful to her betrothed husband was held an adulteress, and as such punishable with death by stoning.<sup>1</sup> This law was, however, at this time never enforced, in the case either of a fully married or of a betrothed wife; and, indeed, we find no instance in Scripture of its actual enforcement. The provision for divorce,<sup>2</sup> whether so intended or not, had the effect of modifying the other law; for men were so generally satisfied with the relief

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxii. 23, 24; John viii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxiv. 1.



thus provided, that the sterner rule, not being resorted to, fell into desuetude: so that a husband might, if he pleased, pardon the wife's offence altogether, and abstain from denouncing her before the Sanhedrim, but scarcely could, if he would, bring her to death. He usually divorced her; and as a man could practically, in this corrupted age, divorce his wife for any cause, or for no cause, a woman was not degraded by the mere fact of divorce. The husband gave a bill of divorcement; and in the case supposed, if he wished to be severe, and stated that he sent her away for adultery, she became a disgraced woman, and a public example. But if he mercifully omitted to state the ground of divorce, there was nothing that appeared against her, though local gossip was probably busy on such occasions.

These facts explain the alternatives which weighed upon the mind of Joseph. It is clearly intimated that he was disposed to cut the knot of difficulties by which he was surrounded, by divorcing his betrothed wife. He was not, however, inclined 'to make her a public example,' by stating the real cause in the bill of divorcement; but was disposed to arrange the matter 'privily' and quietly, by refraining from assigning any cause for his proceeding. From this it will be seen, that those interpreters err who tell us that Mary was in danger of her life from any course that Joseph could take. They tell us rightly what was the law in such a case; but they neglect to inform us that this law was never enforced.

Joseph's disturbed cogitations on this matter were brought to a happy conclusion, by his being visited in a dream by an angel—probably the same angel who had appeared to Mary—telling him to dismiss all fear, and to take home his wife; for her condition involved no stain upon her, being caused by the divine power, which was now about to give effect to the ancient prophecies which had for ages formed the hope of the nation. The unborn child was to be called JESUS (which means SAVIOUR), 'for He shall save his people from their sins.'

We may be sure that it was with a glad heart the good Joseph rose from sleep, relieved of the heavy burden of his

thoughts. If his own dream was to be believed (of which he was able to judge), still more was Mary's vision credible. The one confirmed and authenticated the other. The usual time for taking her home had already come ; and he delayed not to afford her the protection which the formal completion of his marriage with her would supply. Hence Jesus came to be formally recognised as the son of Joseph ; and his early years rested under the shield of a poor man's honour, until the time came for Him to assert the claims of his heavenly parentage.

### Twenty-eighth Week—Fourth Day.

THE TAXING.—LUKE II. 1-5.

THE fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, is recorded by St. Matthew ; but how it happened that He should be born there, when Nazareth was the ordinary residence of Joseph and Mary, both before and after that event, he leaves unexplained. We are not left in the dark, however, for this desirable explanation is supplied by St. Luke ; and his explanation has suggested doubts and difficulties with which it is well that the reader should be acquainted. Indeed, it must not be concealed that certain misbelievers have employed it for the purpose of discrediting the historical truth of the gospel narrative.

What Luke says is : ' There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one unto his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.'

The leading objection taken to this is, that the 'taxing' (or rather census, registration, or enrolment)<sup>1</sup> under Cyrenius,

<sup>1</sup> The word may signify simply the act of numbering or enrolling the people, or of this enrolling *together with* the assessment or taxation founded thereon.

here said to have taken place at the time of our Lord's birth, and in the reign of Herod, did not really occur till ten years later, in the time of his son Archelaus ; and that this is the only census taken by the Romans in Judea of which we have any information.

The circumstances of this census are made known to us by Josephus. Archelaus had been deposed by Augustus, and banished to Vienne in Gaul, leaving much property behind him in Judea, and the land without a king. The emperor proposed to secure this property, and to bring the people under the condition, common among the subject provinces of the empire, of *direct* tribute to the imperial government. To accomplish these objects, Augustus appointed as president of Syria, Cyrenius or Quirinus—a man of consular rank, who stood high in his favour—with orders to sell the property of Archelaus, and to take a census of the Jewish people. At the same time, Judea was deprived of the *forms* of independent government which it had enjoyed, through Roman favour to the Herod family, and was made an integral part of the province of Syria, and so of the Roman empire, with a ruler or procurator accountable to the president of Syria—to which office one Coponius was in the first instance appointed. In obedience to his instructions, Cyrenius proceeded to make a census, in accomplishing which he experienced great difficulty. One Judas of Galilee invited the people to resist, on the ground that the intended assessment was an invasion of the national freedom. Great excitement ensued ; and although the right of the strongest prevailed, a popular sect or party was called into existence, the presence of which is recognised in the New Testament history, and which used every effort, and scrupled not at any means, to withstand the Roman domination in Judea. With this party originated the occasional struggles against Roman authority, the final issue of which was the rasure of Jerusalem from the face of the earth.

This census was notorious ; and Luke himself, in Acts v. 37, records an allusion to it as an event from which men dated,—Gamaliel being represented as speaking of ' Judas of

Galilee,' who 'rose up' in '*the days of the taxing*;' and it is certainly incredible, at the first view, that one who speaks of this event in such accurate conformity with history, should in another book commit so grievous an error in reference to it as the charge presumes. If the fact were so notorious as this second reference implies, it is morally impossible that he could have anywhere said that it took place in the days of Herod, when everybody knew at what time, and under what circumstances, and with what results, it actually did take place. The same census, in its results, is also indirectly alluded to in the Gospels; for it was in connection with it 'the tribute money,'<sup>1</sup> rendered to Cæsar, was imposed.

But does not the evangelist distinctly say, in the text before us, that the enrolment which took place at the birth of Christ was that of Cyrenius? We have seen that Luke shows himself in the Acts to have been well acquainted with that transaction; and that its circumstances were too well known for any contemporary historian to have stated anything so absurd, and so capable of instant detection.

But if this be not his meaning, what does he mean? and how comes the name of Cyrenius to be connected with a transaction that took place ten years before? If we look closely, we shall see that, so far from committing the blunder which has been imputed to him, the imputation itself grows out of the care which he took to prevent any such misconception. What he positively affirms is, that, in or about the time of our Lord's birth, a decree for a general registration was issued by Augustus, in consequence of which Joseph went, accompanied by Mary, to Bethlehem, to be registered there. In recording this, it seems to have occurred to the evangelist that, in order to prevent confusion, he should specify that the registration, though then decreed, was not executed, or not carried out to its full results, till some years later, when Cyrenius was president; and therefore he interposes parenthetically the information, that this registration, though decreed, was not fully made until 'Cyrenius was governor of Syria.'

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 19; Mark xii. 14; Luke xx. 22.

But we may be told that there is no record of any previous decree for registration taking place at the time mentioned. In reply it may be asked, *Where* might we expect to find such a record? Certainly not in the Roman historians, who do not even mention the great census under Cyrenius, which undoubtedly did take place. Josephus does mention *that* census, and to him, it may be urged, we may look for some notice of this earlier registration. But Josephus continually manifests a disposition to exaggerate whatever tended to the exaltation of his nation, and to suppress whatever tended to its disparagement. The completed registration under Cyrenius he could not forbear to mention, as it was too notorious, and involved consequences too essential to the current of his history. As, therefore, the earlier decree was by circumstances rendered abortive, and had not become historically memorable, while it inflicted upon the nation a serious humiliation at the time when it seemed in the enjoyment of high distinction, there was every reason why Josephus should take no account of it. No Greek or Roman reader would remember a circumstance so obscure, and Josephus was the last man to produce it to them; and there was no Jewish reader, keenly alive to the national honour, but would applaud him for the suppression.

It so happens, however, that Josephus, without expressly mentioning this decree for registration, does state some circumstances which point to the enrolment, and which fix the time for it in perfect conformity with the statement of the evangelist.

He states that Herod, towards the close of his reign, 'excited the deep displeasure of the emperor, in consequence of some misrepresentations of his conduct which had reached the imperial ear, and which seemed to imply a claim to the exercise of more independent powers than became one who was really a vassal of the empire. On this Augustus wrote him a very sharp letter, to the effect, that although he had hitherto treated him as a friend, he should henceforth deal with him as a subject.'<sup>1</sup> Herod sent an embassy to excuse or justify his

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xvi. 9, 3.

conduct ; but it was repeatedly refused a hearing, and Herod was obliged to submit to all the injuries inflicted on him. The chief of these were the initiatory steps for the formal reduction of his realm to the condition of a Roman province ; for soon after Josephus lets it transpire, that ' the whole nation took an oath to Cæsar and the king jointly,' the date of which transaction entirely coincides with that of the one before us, and is no doubt really the same, as it is known that the custom of the Roman census required a return of the ages and properties of the persons subject to its operation, to be made upon oath. The reason for registering ages was, that by the Roman law, males in the subject provinces were liable to a capitation tax from the age of fourteen years, and females from the age of twelve, both up to sixty-five years being subject to this tax or tribute-money.

The reason that the matter did not at this time proceed any further than the issue of the decree, and the initiatory steps taken therein, was that Herod, having sent to Rome a trusty ambassador, Nicolaus of Damascus (from whose account Josephus confessedly derived his information), the latter contrived to gain the ear of Augustus, and placed the conduct of his master in such a light as mollified the emperor's anger, restored his old regard for Herod, and, as a consequence, must have induced him to recall (or rather to suspend the operation of) the decree which had been intended for his punishment, and which had in fact inflicted a deep humiliation upon him. Ten years after, however, the intention indicated in this decree was carried into full effect by Cyrenius under the circumstances already described.

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Another and more probable solution of this chronological difficulty we owe mainly to the learned and acute researches of A. W. Zumpt of Berlin, a summary of which the English reader may see in Alford's *Commentary* (Luke ii. 1), and in Lewin's *Fasti Sacri* (p. 132). I here state the results only.

It appears that P. S. Quirinus, called by Luke Cyrenius, was consul in B.C. 12, and was therefore from that time qualified to fill the office of governor of Syria. From B.C. 12 till B.C. 4 the names

of the governors are recorded in history, and that of Quirinus is not among them. From B.C. 4 till A.D. 4 the record is blank; no name has been found. But during that period the census here mentioned must have taken place. From the exhaustive process of investigation applied by Zumpt, from one or two incidental notices in history, and from some fragmentary inscriptions which may be seen in Lewin, there is a very strong probability that Quirinus was governor of Syria from B.C. 4 till B.C. 2; and during his rule a census of the province was either first ordered by the imperial government, or first carried into effect, having been previously ordered. Grammatically, the passage will bear either interpretation. The decree for the census may have been issued, as Lewin supposes, when Varus was governor in B.C. 6, and carried out to completion under Quirinus. The *Commentatio* of Zumpt deserves the attention of every student of history, as well as of every biblical critic.

### *Twenty-eighth Week—Fifth Day.*

‘ALL THE WORLD.’—LUKE II. I.

A CORRECT understanding of the objections to which Luke's account of the ‘taxing’ has by some been considered open, and the explanation of them, and the answers to them, involve so much interesting matter in illustration of the times and country, that, although yesterday a sufficient vindication of the principal matter was afforded, it may be well to direct our further attention to some secondary points which have been produced in connection with the main subject.

It is argued, that from the large expression employed—‘that all the world should be taxed’—Luke clearly means, that Augustus commanded a general census, embracing the whole Roman empire. But no such census is mentioned by the writers of the period, who simply record separate provincial valuations instituted at different times.

Now, the term employed by the evangelist by no means demands the universality ascribed to it. Indeed, the literal sense is impossible, as the Roman power did not embrace all

the world ; and if one limitation is inevitable, another is allowable. It is true, the Romans applied this phrase popularly to their empire ; but it is sometimes used, not of the whole world, nor of the whole Roman empire, but of a particular country, which is the sphere of the individual writer's statement. It was thus one of those popular phrases in which particular subjects are expressed by universal terms : just as we say 'everybody' when we mean many persons of our acquaintance or neighbourhood ; or, as the French use the very phrase in question, 'all the world'—*tout le monde*—in the same sense. If we were commenting upon the Old Testament, we could point to the fact that there is but one word in Hebrew for 'the earth' and 'the land ;' and that the land, *i.e.* of Israel, is very often denoted where 'the earth' appears in translations. But in the New Testament we have a different language, to which the same conditions do not apply ; yet it is true that even here, the large term which in Greek denotes 'the earth' (ἡ γῆ) is really restricted to a particular country, as the reader will perceive by a glance at the texts noted below,<sup>1</sup> in all of which the Greek term for 'the earth' is employed to denote the land of Israel. The evangelist may therefore be well understood to mean the whole land, that is, all the inhabitants of the land. This is the view we entertain, and with which all the historical circumstances to which we last evening referred seemed to be in agreement, pointing as they do to a provincial rather than to a general census. Nevertheless we are not driven to this as our only resource ; for, in fact, there are many vindicators of the evangelical narrative who maintain that the census *was* a general one. Nothing is more futile than to argue from our own ignorance. It is surely most illogical to say, that we do not know from profane history that there was a general census in the time of Augustus, and *therefore* none took place. It is to be observed that Luke does not say that a census did take place—only that it was decreed ; and being only decreed, but not executed, the historians whose remains we possess might

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 5, xxvii. 45 ; Mark xv. 33 ; Luke iv. 25, xxi. 23, 35, xxiii. 44 ; Eph. vi. 3 ; James v. 17 ; Rom. ix. 28, comp. Isa. x. 23.



well pass it over. Even the census actually executed under Cyrenius is not mentioned by Roman historians ; yet those who dare to question the authority of a fact explicitly recorded only by St. Luke, have no hesitation in accepting the testimony of Josephus in regard to a fact which he alone expressly records : thus allowing to that easy-minded historian a weight of authority denied to the inspired evangelist. But further to illustrate the futility of the argument from the silence of history : By the same process of argumentation, it might be denied that any geometrical survey of the Roman empire took place in the time of Augustus ; for no such survey is mentioned in contemporary history, while yet the fact that it did take place is established by the allusions of later and non-historical authors. If the geometrical survey is passed over by contemporary historians, is it any way strange that a census should be left unrecorded ? The only authors extant from whom a notice of a general census might be expected, are Tacitus, Dio Cassius, and Suetonius ; but the annals of Tacitus do not commence till the reign of Tiberius. In Dio's history there is a chasm between the years of Rome 748 and 752, and it is in this interval that the birth of Christ falls. Suetonius certainly makes no mention of a census ; and he is thus the only authority on whose silence the lack of evidence from antiquity rests. There are still, however, some traces which indicate the probability of such a census ; and it is not unlikely that some distinct mention of it may yet be found. It is, for instance, stated by all the authorities lately named, that Augustus left behind him, written in his own hand, a *libellus*, or outline of the empire, which contained statements of the public wealth, the number of the citizens, and of allies in arms ; how many were the fleets, the kingdoms, the provinces, tributes or taxes, as well as burdens and benefactions. Can a state paper of this character have had any other foundation than a general census or registration of the people, with valuation of fixed property ? and may this not, in the highest probability, have been connected with, or formed part of, the same operation which produced the geometrical survey taken in this reign ? It is thus seen that

even those who allow the largest acceptance to the words of the evangelist, are not to have their mouths stopped by any arguments the gainsayers are able to produce.

It has further been urged, that the transaction, as recorded by St. Luke, has no aspect of a Roman census, but rather of a Jewish one, under which the tribal and family distributions required the persons to repair to the seat of the family, where the registers were kept. To this it might be answered, that the Roman functionaries, requiring the aid of the native officers, would naturally allow the latter to follow the course to which the nation was best accustomed, and which its internal arrangements made most effectual in their hands for the objects in view. But, in point of fact, this objection is founded on imperfect knowledge, for there was really not such difference between the Roman and the Jewish process as is thus assumed. They were not identical; but the Jewish registration had sufficient resemblance to the Roman census to expose to derision the assertion, that Luke put the customs of a Jewish census into a Roman one, for the purpose of sending Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, that he might be able to show that Jesus was born at that place, in conformity with the prophetic intimations. A learned German author,<sup>1</sup> in a treatise on the census, has shown very clearly that it was to the *forum originis*, which may be freely rendered 'the town hall of his family,' that, during the imperial sway, each citizen was required to repair for the purposes of the census.

It is further objected that, as males only were registered, it could not be necessary that Mary should proceed to Bethlehem along with Joseph for that purpose—at a time also when, from her condition, travelling must have been irksome to her. Those who think that Luke meant to say that Mary was registered along with Joseph, meet this by alleging that she was an heiress in her own right; and this is really, however some may sneer at it, a solid and sufficient answer on *that* supposition. Yet Mary may not have accompanied her husband for any such purpose. Luke's language rather favours a different opinion.

<sup>1</sup> HUSCHKE. Breslau, 1840.

Had he meant to say that both Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem in order to be inscribed in the family registers, he would have used the plural ; whereas he limits the remark to Joseph by the words, ‘because *he* was of the house and lineage of David.’ It would seem rather that her ‘being great with child’ is assigned as the cause of, not the obstacle to, her going. ‘If her being pregnant was a reason which satisfied Joseph and Mary why the latter should accompany the former on a journey which he was compelled to take, the only parties were satisfied who could judge of what was pleasant or proper in the case. But on an occasion when the whole country would be in movement ; when homes were left on every side, and the needful aid and solace might fail to be found when wanted in Nazareth ; when social disturbances were by no means unlikely, and evil-disposed persons might fall on the sick and defenceless who were obliged to keep their homes,—there were obviously other very strong reasons, besides their own will and desires, why Joseph and Mary should not be separated, and why she, as “being great with child,” should cleave to the side of her natural protector.’<sup>1</sup>

### *Twenty-eighth Week—Sixth Day.*

BETHLEHEM.—LUKE II. 4.

As Jerusalem lay on the road southward to Bethlehem, we cannot doubt that Joseph and Mary passed through the metropolis, and perhaps rested there overnight on their way, unless they arrived so early in the day as to make it worth their while to hasten on to the city of David, which was but six miles farther off. It is, in fact, the first village south of Jerusalem at

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Sacred Literature*, New Series, October 1851; ‘Explanation of the Taxing in Luke ii. 1-5.’ See also HUSCHKE, *Ueber den Census*, Breslau 1840; DAVIDSON’S *Introduction* to the New Testament, i. 206-214; *Pictorial Bible* on the text of Luke; OLSHAUSEN *on the Gospels*; LARDNER’S *Credibility*, Book ii. chap. 1, in *Works*, i. 260-345, edit. 1838.

present, if not formerly ; nor is there any other village near it ; and one scarcely loses sight of Jerusalem over the long hill before he comes in view of Bethlehem.

The first appearance of the town is very striking from whatever direction it is viewed. It is built upon a ridge of considerable elevation, and has a rapid descent on the north and east. The white stone of which the hill is composed, and of which also the town is built, gives it a hot and dusty appearance, but adds to its imposing character and apparent extent.

As viewed from without, the town exhibits an appearance of beauty and stateliness ; and although, like other eastern towns, it somewhat disappoints, when fairly entered, the expectations which the exterior view awakens, the streets are found to be, while narrow and steep, more regular than is usual in the towns of Palestine, and remarkable for their cleanliness. The houses, even the meanest, are well roofed ; and those small domes abound, which give to the towns of the Holy Land an air of comfort, and even of importance, in strong and agreeable contrast with the mud walls and flat roofs of Egypt. These domes, however, imply scarcity of timber suited for the beams of flat roofs ; and it is likely—indeed, it may be gathered from Scripture—that when the land was better wooded, or timber more easily obtained, flat roofs were common in Palestine.

It is to be understood that the town consists mainly of one street. From the gate at the western extremity, to the convent which occupies the eastern, the distance may be about half a mile. This convent is that of the Nativity, and is by far the most conspicuous and imposing building in the place. It covers the spot where it is believed that our blessed Lord was born ; and is a very extensive stone edifice, irregular in its plan, from having been constructed, a portion at a time, at different eras. The church, and perhaps some other parts of the immense pile, were built by the Empress Helena ; and the whole has the appearance of a strong fortress. Of this place, and of its claim to be the spot of the nativity, we shall presently have occasion to write. Whatever doubts may be entertained on

that point, there can be none as to the site of Bethlehem itself. 'This was certainly Bethlehem-Ephrathah, the birth-place of David, and of David's greater son, the Christ, the Lord from heaven. In yonder fields, so conspicuous from these hills, the shepherds undoubtedly kept their watch by night, and heard the angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest: on earth peace; good-will towards men!" and to this very spot were they led to pay their homage to the new-born Saviour.'<sup>1</sup> 'But its celebrity extends far beyond the Christian era: a thousand years before it gave the world the thorn-crowned King—the King of the realm of truth—it bestowed upon the house of Israel its royal psalmist and divine hero. Both David and Christ sprang from Bethlehem. It was this landscape which their eyes surveyed when they first opened beneath the canopy of heaven.'<sup>2</sup> Still further back than this do the memories of the place extend. It was the scene of the events so touchingly related in the book of Ruth. It was here that the good Boaz abode; and here the foreign damsel—destined to become, through him, the fore-mother of David and of Jesus—gleaned his field. Still earlier, it was here that the beloved wife for whom Jacob had served fourteen years, which 'seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her,' was taken away from him, leaving with the mourning father the infant Benjamin as the last dear pledge of her affection. It is singular, indeed, to observe how generally the memories of this place connect themselves with women, whose presence imparts to these memories a tenderness and pathos which are not at any other biblical site so fully awakened. Rachel, Naomi, Ruth, Mary: what a cluster of lovely names connected with Bethlehem, in incidents on which the heart loves to dwell! For other places one such name is enough; but here are four, and because of them, joy, which our own share in the 'glad tidings' here proclaimed awakens, is followed by a softening emotion—perhaps by a tear—as we look up to these white walls, and gaze around upon these hills and valleys.

<sup>1</sup> BELDAM, *Italy and the East*, ii. 59.

<sup>2</sup> TISCHENDORFF, *Travels in the East*, p. 191.

The inhabitants of Bethlehem are about 1500 in number, and are almost all of them of Christian denominations—chiefly Greeks and Roman Catholics, in nearly equal numbers, and a few Armenians. There are no Jews, and the Moslems are very few. This is the result of the severe measures of Ibrahim Pasha, who drove out the Moslem inhabitants and demolished their houses during the insurrection of 1834. Hence many of the houses are seen in ruins, and the streets in some parts encumbered with rubbish.

The Bethlehemites are said to be remarkable for their ferocity and rapacity, which are indeed the common characteristics of the inhabitants of places accounted holy in the East; and the females enjoy a high reputation for virtue, ascribed to the favour of the Virgin. However this may be, their dress is singularly graceful and becoming, probably but little varied from that worn by Naomi and Ruth. The young women wear a light veil, or rather hood; not covering the face like the frightful Turkish *cimaur*, but descending on each side of the face, and closed across the bosom, and showing the front of a low but handsome head-dress, usually composed of strings of silver coins, plaited in among the hair, and hanging down below the chin as a sort of necklace. The mothers and aged women wear a longer and darker robe.

The environs of Bethlehem are very beautiful; but they cannot be said to be well cultivated. There is indeed no good tillage in the country, though the best perhaps is about this ancient town. The soil is fertile, but is encumbered with rocks, and the hills and valleys are covered to a considerable extent with figs, olives, pomegranates, and vineyards. The deep valley on the north side of the town, which is overlooked by the road leading to Jerusalem, presents a scene of beauty and luxuriance rarely equalled in Palestine. The steep hill-sides by which it is bounded are terraced with great care and labour, and covered with fine fruit trees. It is pleasant to regard this favoured spot as a specimen of what may have been the general aspect of the hill country in the prosperous days of the Jewish state, and of what it may perhaps once

more become under the fostering care of a good government, and of an industrious and civilised population. But at present it is only under the walls of considerable towns that any agriculture is practicable. Within not more than two miles of Bethlehem, fields are permitted to lie waste which once employed and abundantly rewarded the labours of a numerous and prosperous peasantry. Now it would be insanity to till those fields. The Bedouins, who are always at hand, seize the fruit and corn even before they come to maturity; and the incursion of a single night is often sufficient to destroy the entire product of a year's industry. Even in broad day these barbarians do not hesitate to drive their beasts through fields of wheat under the owner's eye, and graze their animals upon them without scruple. Under such discouragements, but limited attention is given to agriculture, and the inhabitants rather seek employments attended with less precarious advantage. This they find abundantly in an active and lucrative manufacture of sundry holy trinkets and toys, which are eagerly purchased at a price much beyond their value by the pilgrims, as memorial relics of their visit to the place. These articles consist of models of the Cave of the Nativity, figures of Christ, of the Virgin Mary, of the Apostles, and of various saints, with crucifixes, crosses, rosaries, spoons, cups, platters, having portions of Scripture inscribed upon them in Arabic letters. Some of the articles are wrought and carved in mother-of-pearl, with more skill and taste than one would expect to find in a place so remote; and in some cases the workmanship is so fine, as would not discredit the artists of Britain. The mother-of-pearl is obtained from the Red Sea; and the other materials used for these manufactures are the wood and kernels of the olives that grow in and about the garden of Gethsemane—agate, jasper, and bituminous limestone from the rocks to the west of Bethlehem. They supply the bazaars of Jerusalem with these wares, and press them upon strangers with an importunity that is very annoying.

**Twenty-eighth Week—Seventh Day.**

THE INN AND THE STABLE.—LUKE II. 6, 7.

WHEN Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem, they found the place so full that it was difficult for them to obtain any accommodation, especially such accommodation as it now appeared that Mary's condition might presently require. They did not find such resources as we possess in coming to a strange town. There were no inns, in our sense of the word,—no lodging-houses; nor did bills stuck up in the windows, of 'apartments to let,' apprise them where they might find a room during their necessary stay in the place. The idea of giving for hire the accommodation of his private house, would have been abhorrent to a Jew of that age, whose point of honour was to offer the use of his house and table freely to all who happened to be known to him, or who came with messages or recommendations from those whom he knew. In an earlier age, even perfect strangers might reckon upon being well entertained wherever they came, being usually invited to his house by some hospitable inhabitant, as soon as they showed by their manner—as by standing still or sitting down at the gate or in the street—that they had no friends in the place to whom they could go. This duty was not always readily performed, as we see in the case of the Levite at Gibeah (Judges xix. 15); and as the country became more thickly peopled, travelling more frequent, and the habits of social life less open and simple, the frequent presence of strangers rendered the duty of entertaining them irksome; so that, instead of rushing to be the first to gain the privilege of receiving them, individual householders held back, for others to take the duty, until at last some one, out of mere shame for the credit of the place, grudgingly undertook the office of entertainer.

When this began to be felt, and it was seen by the inhabitants that the place stood in danger of getting a bad name for inhospitality—which would have been a discredit and an incon-



venience to every inhabitant wherever he went—the first remedy thought of would be in that custom which still exists in the East, and in the less frequented towns of Palestine, of the inhabitants making a yearly allowance to the chief of the village or town for entertaining at his house, or in separate premises near his house, all strangers that came.<sup>1</sup>

Another resource, and the most economical in the long run, and therefore most resorted to where the place is, from its importance or situation, such as to render the visits of strangers so numerous as to be a burdensome charge under the other plan, is to build in or near the town a khan or caravanserai,—a large structure to which the stranger may freely repair, and where he may find lodging and water for himself and his beast without charge,<sup>2</sup> but must himself provide food for both.

Such a building the Bethlehemites had provided for the reception of strangers. That Joseph and Mary availed themselves of its accommodation, would seem to imply that they really were strangers in this the native seat of the family to which they belonged, and might suggest that they had not been born there, and had never lived there. We cannot, however, be certain of this ; for as they clearly came very late, they may have found the friends they had at Bethlehem already over-burdened with guests.

Whether as strangers, or as guests too late for any other accommodation, to the khan they went. But they were too late even there ; for all the lodging chambers were already occupied, so that ‘there was no room for them in the inn.’ What was to be done ? The critical condition of Mary rendered some kind of shelter necessary, and none but that which the stable offered could be found. To the stable therefore they repaired ; and it was in such a place that the Saviour of the world was

<sup>1</sup> In some cases the chief or head-man is allowed by the general government to deduct a certain sum out of the taxes due from the place, to defray the cost of entertaining strangers.

<sup>2</sup> There is sometimes a small fee expected by the person in charge of the place when the traveller leaves. But this is something more than nominally ‘optional’ to a native of the country.

born, while the manger from which the cattle fed became a cradle for Him.

It is worth while to understand everything rightly in which the **Scripture** is concerned ; and it seems to us that some points in the history **have been** egregiously misapprehended, for want of practical knowledge of **the arrangements** which belong to this matter in the East.

For instance, both painters and poets make much of the

— ‘little oxen’s stall,’

in which it is presumed that our Saviour was born ; the idea of such a ‘stall’ being derived from the stables of the humble village inns of the West. But the stable in the present instance was assuredly that of the caravanserai, a large and important public building, with a spacious stable for the use of the travellers’ beasts, for which it was set apart, and where, therefore, **oxen** or any other than cattle used for travelling do not appear.

The **explanation** we give of this incident is founded upon actual **observation**, made while ourselves more than once constrained to lodge in the stable, because there was no room in the inn ; and **was**, in fact, suggested in a place that led us to say—In **such** a stable as this was Jesus **born** ; **here** might have been an **excellent** retreat for the Virgin ; here **she** would be completely **screened** from observation at the time it was needed ; and here, **in this very** ‘manger,’ she might have found no unsuitable ‘cot’ for her **first-born** son.

Let us explain.

A caravanserai of the kind we have in view, and which we regard as most illustrative, presents an external appearance which suggests to a European traveller the idea of a fortress, being an extensive square pile of strong and lofty walls—mostly of brick upon a basement of stone, with a grand archway entrance. This leads not, as one is prepared to expect, to imposing internal buildings, but to a large open area, with a well in the middle, and surrounded on three or four sides with a kind of piazza raised upon a platform three or four feet high,

in the wall behind which are small doors leading to the cells, or oblong chambers, which form the lodgings. The cell, with the space on the platform in front of it, forms the domain of each individual traveller, where he is completely secluded, as the apparent piazza is not open, but is composed of the front arches of each compartment. There is, however, in the centre of one or more of the sides a large arched hall, quite open in front, which serves as the public or travellers' room, to which those of the inmates who are socially inclined repair. The cells are completely unfurnished, and have generally no light but from the door. The traveller is commonly seen in the recess in the front of his apartment, except during the heat of the day; and here he even sleeps at night, unless, when the weather allows, he prefers the roof of the building.



Many of these caravanserais have *no stables*, the cattle of travellers being accommodated in the open area. But in the more complete establishments of the kind, there are very excellent and spacious stables formed of covered avenues extending between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building, the entrance being at one or more of the corners of the inner quadrangle. The stable is on the same level with the court, and thus below the level of the tenements which stand on the raised platform. Nevertheless

this platform is allowed to project behind into the stable, so as to form a bench, to which the heads of the cattle are turned, and on which the travellers may, if they like, rest the nosebags of hair-cloth in which their food is given to them, to enable them to reach the bottom when the contents get low. Besides, it often happens that not only this bench exists in the stable, forming a more or less narrow platform along its extent, but also recesses corresponding to these *in front* of the cells towards the open area, and formed, in fact, by the side walls of these cells being allowed to project behind to the boundary of the platform. These, though small and shallow, form convenient retreats for servants and muleteers in bad weather, but are little used in the mild season, except during the heat of the day. Such a recess we conceive that Joseph and Mary occupied, with their ass or mule—if they had one, as perhaps they had—tethered in front. The recess at the upper end would not be passed by any one ; and it might be rendered quite private by a cloth being stretched across the lower part.

This is the explanation with which our own mind has been satisfied since the opportunity of actual observation in Eastern travel was presented to us ; and to us it is far preferable to any we were able to conceive of the circumstances before that opportunity occurred.

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It is a remarkable fact, that the scenes of the most wondrous events in gospel history were never honoured, never even incidentally mentioned, by the sacred writers after the events themselves had transpired. Not a single passing reference is made in apostolic history to the localities of the annunciation, the crucifixion, the burial, or the ascension. The scene of the nativity appears to have been forgotten, or at least altogether overlooked, like the others. The reason is obvious, and its lesson most instructive. Men's minds were wholly engrossed by gospel truths ; and these truths set forth pure spiritual worship, as contrasted with one regulated by form, locality, and sense. It was not until the first deep and holy impressions of heavenly doctrines began to be obliterated from the human mind, until sense began to usurp ascendancy over spirit, that 'holy places' were sought out and fitted up as shrines for a mistaken devotion. It was a sad day for the church of Christ when

the first holy place was discovered or invented ; for then the great principle which Christ himself had enunciated at the well of Samaria was practically abrogated : ‘Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is Spirit ; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.’

In the second century, the place of our Lord’s birth was first mentioned by Justin Martyr, who says, ‘It was a certain *cave* very close to the village, which cave the prophet Isaiah had pointed out.’ The cave was accordingly taken possession of : it was portioned off into sections corresponding to the various acts in the sacred drama ; it was gorgeously decorated with gold, silver, and precious stones ; one of the noblest churches in the world was built over it by the Empress Helena ; thousands of pilgrims flocked to it from the ends of the earth, to do what He whom they profess to honour expressly commanded them not to do.



## Twenty-ninth Week—First Day.

GOOD TIDINGS.—LUKE II. 8-20.

AT the time that Jesus was born in the stable of the khan at Bethlehem, there were shepherds abroad on the neighbouring common, watching their flocks by night. Suddenly they were startled by the appearance of an intense brightness before them, in the midst of which they discerned a form not of earth. They were terrified; but the heavenly visitant hastened to reassure them: 'Fear not;' and to make himself known as the messenger of glorious and happy tidings for them and for the world: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' And, as if at once and for ever to rectify the common notions of earthly glory which they probably, like most of the Jews, connected with the appearance of this great personage, the angel added, 'And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe'—where? Wrapped up in goodly Babylonish garments—reposing beneath canopies of state, upon a couch of ivory and gold? Nay, but 'wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger.' Familiar with far different expectations, did it cast a chill into their hearts, to learn that this great Deliverer was born into a condition of life no better than their own? It did not. Perhaps this very fact gave a touch of tenderness to their sympathies, which had else been wanting; and probably it was in regard to the heartfelt nature of the sympathies with which they especially would hail one who, by the manner of his coming, announced himself as the friend of the poor and lowly, that to these shepherds, rather than to the learned or the great, was this proclamation made. To the one class, the swaddling-clothes and the manger had

been an offence and a scorn ; to the other, they were badges to signify that He was come—come at last, prayed for and waited for so long—as *their* friend,—as one who would be constrained by his own circumstances to know their state, and to feel for them.

Besides, who could be cold in the presence of that great joy which moved the heavens ? For no sooner had the cheerful voice of the angel ceased, than there broke in a full chorus of song from ‘a multitude of the heavenly host.’ And these were the words they uttered : ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.’ O happy shepherds, who alone among men were ever privileged to hear the songs of heaven ! And the song was well worthy of angels, expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become, to an acute apprehension, almost oppressive by the pregnant fulness of their meaning. First and chief of all, GLORY TO GOD—for devising a means for man’s renovation and redemption which ‘the angels desire to look into,’ and which they have not failed, and for ever will not fail, to extol in their songs on high as the most renowned demonstration of the glory of his goodness. Then, PEACE ON EARTH ; ‘for He that was born was the Prince of peace, and came to reconcile God with man, and man with his brother ; and to make, by the sweetness of his example, and the influence of a holy doctrine, such happy atonements<sup>1</sup> between disagreeing natures, such confederations and societies between enemies, that the wolf and the lamb should lie down together, and a little child, boldly and without danger, put his hand in the nest and cavern of the aspick.’<sup>2</sup> It was probably not without important significance with regard to this fact, that it had been so ordered, in the providence of God, that at the time this child was born, an unwonted and universal peace

<sup>1</sup> Observe the now obsolete sense of *reconciliation*, in which this word is here used, and which its very texture shows to have been its primary signification—at-one-ment.

<sup>2</sup> JEREMY TAYLOR’S *Great Exemplar*. London, at the signe of the Angel in Ivie Lane. 1653.

pervaded the Roman empire, and through its vast extent man lifted not up sword or spear against his fellow. Augustus having then composed all the wars of the world, caused, in sign thereof, the gates of the temple of Janus to be shut; being only the third time this had occurred during the seven centuries over which the history of Rome then extended. Surely, as the great writer just cited remarks, 'it could be no less than miraculous that so great a body as the Roman empire, consisting of so many parts, whose constitutions were differing, their humours contrary, their interests contradicting each other's greatness, and all these violently oppressed by an usurping power, should have no limb out of joint—not so much as an aching tooth or a rebellious humour in that huge collection of parts; but so it seemed good in the eye of Heaven, by so great and good a symbol, to declare not only the greatness, but the goodness of that Prince that was there born in Judea, the Lord of all the world.'

But the glad tidings which the angels brought to the shepherds were fraught not only with glory to God and peace to the earth, but with GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN. Of that goodwill, the manifest rapture of the angels, at an event in which they had no other than a benevolent concern, nor any other interest than that which all pure natures feel in whatever redounds to the glory of God, is most interesting evidence. Some find difficulties in this appearance of the angels, and even say, more or less plainly, that they would willingly dispense with it. Not so with us. We could not spare it on any account. If it were only for this one sentence, their appearance becomes most necessary and valuable. There have been times when the manifest delight of angels, at the tidings they were commissioned to deliver, has seemed to us of itself such strong and touching evidence of the 'goodwill towards men' which they declared, and has impressed so distinct a sense of *reality* upon all those marvellous things in which they took part, and on that intercourse between earth and heaven of which they are the agents, as served to refresh and strengthen our faith, and impressed the feeling, that even



here we are citizens of a large dominion, of which this earth, with all its too-absorbing interests, is but a part. It seems to raise one in the scale of creation, to feel himself thus the object of such benevolent sympathy to heavenly natures ; and their own good-will authenticates a feeling still higher and more precious, the good-will of God to man in Christ—the new-born Redeemer—which they proclaimed with so much joy. The intelligence was so great, and its significance so marvellously strange in the midst of all its impressive earnestness, that it had scarcely gained belief from a cold or unsympathizing messenger ; but these happy, rejoicing, thankful angels carry our hearts with them, and convince us that there is indeed, as they declare, good-will in heaven towards man. Who can measure the depths of that good-will ? Even the angels cannot fully fathom it ; and man—how little, too often, does he regard it ! how little does he strive to realize an adoring sense of its magnitude ! how little to rest upon it in full assurance of faith ! . Of this good-will, the gift of a Saviour to those who were otherwise utterly undone and lost, was the highest possible manifestation ; the evidence in which of love to man, no words can adequately express, no heart adequately feel. But if not adequately, we can entertain this vast conception vitally ; and to be counted worthy of this, is the highest privilege of which our mortal state—or indeed, the state beyond the grave—is capable : and ‘ Behold, how He loved us ! ’ is probably the most frequent, as it is the noblest, expression of holy contentment and satisfaction in the realms of light.

The good shepherds waited but to hear the close of the angels’ song ; and when all again was dark and silent, they hurried away, leaving their flocks behind, to witness at Bethlehem that which the Lord had made known unto them. They found the child lying in the manger ; and being thus satisfied that the vision of angels, with which they had been favoured, was no illusion, ‘ they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.’ This publication, however, was probably confined to a small circle, and soon passed out of present or active remembrance ; the object being, appa-

rently, to secure evidence which might be available hereafter, that Jesus of Nazareth was born in the city of David in the time of the taxing, and that He was declared by angels to be the Christ of God. It is very possible that the shepherds, and those who heard their report, supposed that He had perished in Herod's massacre, or that they lost sight of Him altogether, till He appeared with the claim to be the Son of God; and then all this would be keenly remembered, and produced in corroboration of that claim.

Thus the object of the appearance to them was to make them witnesses for Christ; and to show that the birth, so little noted by men, had not passed without heavenly celebrations.

But why were these poor shepherds chosen as such witnesses? The Lord, who made choice of them, knows. It was necessary that the witnesses should reside in or near Bethlehem; and these shepherds alone were abroad and awake in the depth of the silent night. Moreover, the gospel delights to put honour on those of low degree. The general yearning for the appearance of the Messiah, which at this time was felt throughout Judea, must have acquired peculiar intensity at Bethlehem, where it was known from prophecy that Christ should be born; and, no doubt, 'even among the shepherds who kept nightly watch over their flocks, were some who anxiously awaited the appearance of the Messiah. It is true, the account does not say that the shepherds thus longed for the Messiah. But we are justified, by what followed, in presupposing it as the ground for such a communication being especially made to them; and it is not unlikely that these simple souls, untaught in the traditions of the scribes, and nourished by communion with God, amid the freedom of nature, in a solitude congenial with meditation and prayer, had formed a purer idea of the Messiah from the necessities of their own hearts, than prevailed at that time among the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

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It does not follow that, because these men were shepherds, they were therefore very poor and very illiterate. The patriarchs were

<sup>1</sup> NEANDER'S *Life of Jesus*, i. § 17.

all shepherds ; and Jacob, the possessor of large flocks and herds, was able to say to Laban : ‘ In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house.’ David was also in youth a shepherd ; and some of his most beautiful lyrics appear to have been written when following the sheep. In fact, Bethlehem was a town of shepherds ; and, judging as well from ancient history as from modern custom, it may be safely concluded that every family in the town had one or more of its members engaged in this ancient and honourable employment. The shepherds to whom the angels announced the advent of the Messiah, may have been members of the first families of Bethlehem.

### *Twenty-ninth Week—Second Day.*

THE CAVE OF THE NATIVITY.—LUKE II. 16.

Two evenings ago, we produced what appeared to us needful for the correct apprehension of the particulars given by the evangelist respecting the birthplace of our Lord—the stable of an inn. We now propose to conduct the reader to that which is at this day shown and visited as the spot where Jesus was born.

We have already explained, that what is called the Convent of the Nativity, said to contain this interesting spot, is situated at the eastern extremity of Bethlehem. It stands on the edge of a steep rock, overlooking a plain of several miles in extent, in which, at little more than a mile from the convent walls, is pointed out the place where the shepherds kept their flocks, when the glad tidings of the Saviour’s birth were made known to them. In this ‘field of the shepherds,’ as it is called, is a walled enclosure of some thirty yards across, and in the centre of it a small cave, formerly used as a chapel by the priests of the Greek church. This is called ‘the grotto of the shepherds,’ and is shown as the place where they were abiding in the fields.

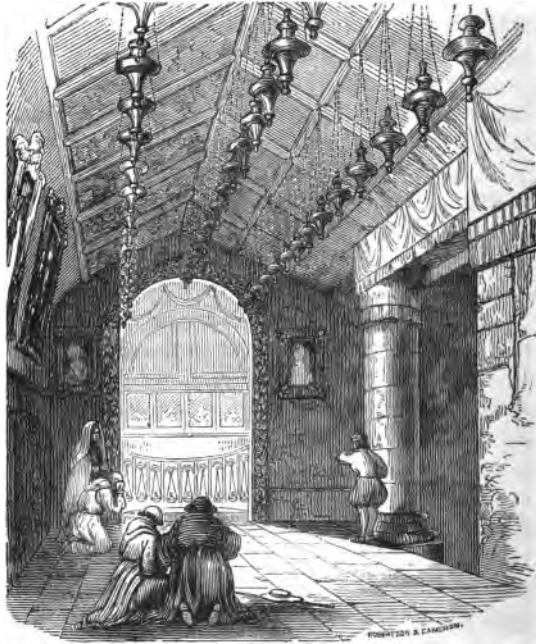
The convent has the appearance of a rude fortress, and is

well suited for defence against all the means of attack with which it could be threatened in the middle ages, or which are now likely to be brought against it by its only enemies—the wandering Arabs, who might visit it for plunder. It is accessible only at one entrance, secured by a massive iron door; so low, like the entrances of most houses, and of all places of defence in Palestine, that a tall man must stoop nearly double to pass, and even a short man must enter bent and head foremost, in a posture little adapted either for aggression or resistance.

The church contained in this fortress-convent was built by the mother of Constantine, the empress Helena—so many monuments of whose zeal are still extant in the Holy Land. It is a magnificent structure, though now in a neglected and semi-ruinous state. It is thirty-four paces long, and forty broad, ornamented with forty-eight monolith columns of the Corinthian order, arranged in four rows of twelve columns each. The columns are about two and a half feet in diameter, by more than twenty in height. The church was once richly adorned with paintings and mosaics; but of these only a few mutilated fragments remain. The pavement is out of repair. The roof is of timber (said to be cedar of Lebanon, but this is doubted); and the naked, rough pavement which it supports has an effect so bad and so incongruous, as to suggest that it must be a restoration rendered necessary by some casualty, and made in adverse days. In fact, the church is now little other than an outer court or thoroughfare, through which entrance is gained to the smaller churches and the apartments of the convent. Formerly, the sects which claimed interest in the place had the use of the church by turns, and then it was kept in good order; but as this bred interminable quarrels among them, it was arranged to enclose certain parts as chapels for the separate and exclusive use of each: thus, the church being built in the form of a Latin cross, the nave is deserted, but the Greeks have appropriated the choir to their separate use; and the Latins and Armenians have each a wing of the transept. They still, however, have the use of the cave of the

nativity, and other consecrated spots, according to an established order ; and although one might suppose the difference between the old and the new style,<sup>1</sup> by giving to them different terms for the celebration of Christmas, would prevent occasion of collision, the feuds and petty rivalries which are maintained among them are most disgraceful to the Christian name which they bear, and distressful to the European travellers who visit the place. The Latin, or Roman Catholic, portion is the smallest, but is the most richly adorned, and it possesses the only organ to be found in Palestine.

The most holy place—the sanctuary—the final object of all



these arrangements, is a small cavern, in which it is asserted

<sup>1</sup>The Latins follow the new style ; the Greeks, and other oriental churches, the old. This makes eleven days' difference.

that the Saviour of the world was born. This lies under the Greek chapel ; but the entrance to it is through a door on the southern side of that of the Armenians ; whence, by a flight of marble steps, one descends into an irregular apartment, which we are taught to regard as the stable in which the Virgin gave birth to 'her first-born son.' Its character as a stable, and even as a grotto, is quite concealed by the ornaments and decorations with which, in awfully bad taste, it has been overlaid, to the entire disguise of its real character. It is a long, narrow, and rather low room, fitted up and much occupied for religious worship. Its original features are quite concealed by the marbles, embroidered hangings, gold lamps, and other adornments, which shock and discourage the belief they were designed to foster. The grotto is about twelve paces in length by four broad, and contains three principal altars. Under the first, upon the marble floor, the precise spot of the nativity is marked by a star composed of silver and precious stones, around which the following inscription forms a circle : 'HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST,'—that is, 'Here was Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary.' Golden lamps continually burn over this sacred spot. Above it is a marble table, with the usual decorations of an altar in the Catholic church. Here the pilgrims prostrate themselves, offering up their prayers, and kissing the star and the pavement around it.

A few yards from the star of the nativity is the representative of the manger (the original being shown at Rome), in which the infant Jesus was laid in lack of a proper crib or cradle. One descends by two steps into a room, called the Presence, ten feet square, which has the altar of the manger on one side, and directly opposite to it another altar, marking the place where the magi worshipped. Here, too, the original features of the place, whatever they may have been, are disguised by polished marble and other decorations. The manger is a block of white marble, hollowed out in proper form. It occupies a recess in the grotto, and is less than two feet in height, by perhaps four in length. The altar of the wise men

is fenced by a kind of screen, above which is seen a painting that represents them as doing homage, and offering precious gifts to the holy child Jesus.

In another subterranean chamber are shown the altar and sepulchre of the innocents slain by Herod ; and a preserved tongue is exhibited as a relic of one of those infants. Another altar marks the spot of the circumcision ; and a third, the place where the angel appeared to Joseph, warning him to flee into Egypt. We are also shown the cell within whose narrow bounds, close by the birthplace of his Lord, St. Jerome spent so many years of his long life in various learned and biblical labours, including that translation of the Scriptures which still remains ' the authorized version ' of the Latin church. There, too, is his sepulchre, but it contains not his ashes, which were early transferred to Rome ; and there are the tombs of his disciples, Eusebius of Cremona and the noble Roman lady Paula, with her daughter Eutochia.

These at least are realities, and, with the church which was built a hundred years before their time, carry back to a remote age the tradition, that this was indeed the spot where our Lord was born. In fact, the traditional evidence in favour of the site is very strong. If real, it would be a miserable affectation, in those who think the birth-chamber of one of their own noted men worthy of being sought out and visited, to assume indifference to this—unless so far as indifference is engendered by the fripperies which have disguised the true character of the place. But is it the real spot ? That *is* the question ; and who shall answer it ? The evidence is strong, seeing that the existing tradition can be traced up to within a generation or two of the event. The objections urged against it are, that it lies beyond the limits of the town, and that it is a grotto or rock-excavation. To the former objection much weight cannot be given ; for, besides that the exact limits of the ancient town are unknown, Scripture states nothing as to the precise position of the inn, while custom is certainly in favour of a spot near the entrance of, or even outside, the town. In almost any other country it might be held a suspicious cir-

cumstance, that local or church traditions ascribe to grottos the scene of so many of the remarkable events of Scripture. But in this limestone region, natural caverns in the rocks abound, and others have been formed, or shaped and enlarged by art. They are still used, as of old, as stalls for cattle, and places of shelter; and it cannot be disputed that, in such a country, such caves and cuttings in the rock must always have subserved a variety of domestic purposes. In an age when the population was more dense, and pastoral operations more extensive, this use of grottos must have been exceedingly common; and there are probably few rocks in Palestine, rising at all above the surface, which have not at some time or other been hollowed out for the use of the living or the dead. There is, then, no intrinsic improbability in the use of a rock stable in the case before us. It is easy to conceive of a caravanserai built in front of a cavern, which might serve as a stable to it. One traveller sees a propriety in regarding this as the grotto of 'a village inn.' But in the East there are no village inns like ours—several in a village, each with its small stable. There is one inn or caravanserai—large in proportion to the village—with a stable, if any, of corresponding dimensions; and although the grotto of the nativity might be an adequate stable for one of our 'village inns,' it would hardly be so for a public caravanserai—the *sole* resting-place for strangers in the village. On the other hand, as we lately stated, the caravanserais are often without stables; the open area, or the shady side of it, being used as a resting-place for the cattle; and a grotto existing on the spot might be used merely as a subsidiary aid to the accommodation of the place, without pretending to offer adequate stabling for the beasts of all the travellers who might repair thither; and these would be few, except on very extraordinary occasions, such as that which brought up Joseph and Mary to their family town. For Bethlehem was too near Jerusalem to be needed as a resting-place for those who were journeying to or from that city; and there was no commercial or other business to draw many travellers thither, except such as visited their friends, and who would, of course, lodge with them.



Upon the whole, the only solid objection to this cavern would be the fact of its insufficiency to be the stable of a caravan-serai ; and if this, for the reasons stated, cannot be insisted on, there seems to remain no valid objection against the site which has so long been connected with our Lord's birth, and the identity of which has only of late years been called in question. A belief in the identity of a spot, or a leaning to that belief, may, however, be perfectly consistent with the rejection of many legends that have been grafted on it. And, in the Protestant mind, there can be no other feeling than one of pitying indignation at the paltry emptinesses which have been gathered around this spot, and the trumpery ornamentation by which the cavern has been entirely divested of that natural character which might have been impressive, by showing or suggesting to what lowliness the King of Glory descended when He took upon Him to deliver man.

### *Twenty-ninth Week—Third Day.*

THE GENEALOGIES.—MATTHEW I. 1-17; LUKE III. 23-38.

THERE are two genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels—one given by Matthew, the other by Luke. The object of both is to show that, according to the flesh, the holy child was lineally descended from king David. This fact was often asserted in our Lord's lifetime, and never denied by the Jews—as they would have been glad to do had it been in their power. But the case was too plain, being no doubt attested by the genealogical lists of the family preserved at Bethlehem. Indeed, the fact was so notorious, that Jesus was frequently addressed by strangers as 'the son of David ;' and the public knowledge of this circumstance should always be borne in mind in reading the gospel history, since it materially affected the relations in which He appeared, and the point of view in which He was regarded by the people. Even apart from the Messiahship, which was to be in that line, any member of the house of David who came forward in a prominent character, would be

an object of attention and solicitude, as possessing certain hereditary claims to the temporal sovereignty ; and there can be no doubt, looking to the circumstances of the times, and the unpopularity of the government, that the people would have thrown themselves heart and soul into any feasible, or indeed unfeasible, attempt to restore that ancient and popular line. Indeed, although our Lord was always careful to let it be understood that his kingdom was not of this world, there was a time, and perhaps more than one time, when the people would have taken Him by force and made Him their king, had He not withdrawn himself from public view. Hence, also, the dangerous malignancy of the charge eventually made against Him, that He aspired to be a king ; which would have been simply ridiculous, had not the fact of his being of the royal house of David given political significance to the charge, and had it not been true that a claim to reign on the part of an already renowned member of that illustrious house would have stirred the heart of the nation from Dan to Beersheba.

It is true, however, and is evinced by the position of Joseph and Mary, that the families tracing their descent from the house of David had fallen into poverty, and also into neglect—except in so far as their hopes of producing, at no distant day, ‘the desire of all nations’ were recognised. When, after the return from the Babylonish captivity, the sovereignty had been assumed, first by the high priests of Levitical descent, subsequently by the Asmonean family, and finally by the house of Herod, of Idumæan origin, but engrafted into the Maccabean line by the marriage of Herod with Mariamne, it was the most obvious policy to leave in the obscurity into which they had sunk, that race which, if it should produce any pretender of the least distinction, might advance an hereditary claim, as dear to the people as it would be dangerous to the reigning dynasty. All the descendants of the royal race seem to have sunk so low, that even the popular belief which looked to the line of David as that from which the Messiah was to spring, did not invest them with sufficient importance to awaken the jealousy or suspicion of the rulers

The fact that the descent of Jesus from David could be established by registers, and the presence of two such minute pedigrees as those of Matthew and Luke, evince that the Jews were, up to this time, still careful in the registration of family descents. The division of the whole Hebrew nation into tribes, and the allotment to each tribe, and to every family in each tribe, of its distinct portion of territory, as an inalienable possession, rendered it indispensable that genealogical tables should be preserved. It might seem that the disturbance of this arrangement occasioned by the captivity, or rather by the fact that only two of the twelve tribes returned from Babylon, would impair this motive. But the rabbins assure us, that from that time they became still more careful in registering their genealogies; with immediate reference, doubtless, to the expectation of the Messiah; but with the ulterior object, in the purposes of Divine Providence, of preserving means for establishing the exact fulfilment of the predictions respecting his parentage. That such registers existed to even a later date is shown by Josephus, who declares that he traced his own descent in the tribe of Levi by public registers; and he expressly informs us that, however dispersed and dispossessed his nation were, they never failed to have exact genealogical tables prepared from the authentic documents which were kept at Jerusalem; and that in all their sufferings they were particularly careful to preserve these tables, which were renewed from time to time. Since, however, the period of their destruction as a nation by the Romans, all their tables of descent seem to be lost, and now they are utterly unable to trace the pedigree of any one Israelite who might lay claim to be their promised, and still expected, Messiah.

These considerations are more important than they may seem at first view, as they show that, genealogical registers being still kept by the Jews, means existed for testing the claims of descent which any one might make, for rendering the fabrication of a genealogy impossible, and (apart from the question of inspiration) for furnishing the materials of the pedigrees which the evangelists have given; thus meeting the objections

of recent misbelievers who have ventured to insinuate that no materials for such genealogies then existed among the Jews, and that they were made up, that is, fabricated, to produce a correspondence with the prophecies, which required that the Messiah should be of the line of David.

But the two genealogies are materially different. They coincide until David, when Matthew takes the reigning line; whereas Luke takes the younger and inferior line by David's son Nathan. They concur, indeed, in Salathiel and Zorobabel, at the time of the captivity; but then are divided again; and even at the close the difference is maintained, for Matthew makes Joseph the son of Jacob, whereas Luke represents him as the son of Heli, or Eli. He could not have been naturally the son of *both* these persons; and the essential differences in the two lines of descent allow no satisfactory solution in the idea, that Jacob and Heli are different names for the same person. They are obviously two different genealogies from the common ancestor David. This being the case, there can be little doubt that the genealogy in Matthew is that of Joseph, and the one in Luke that of Mary—the former being the *legal*, and the latter the *real* genealogy of Jesus.

Indeed, Luke seems to have indicated his meaning as clearly as could be, consistently with the absence of a woman's name in a pedigree, by distinguishing the real from the legal genealogy, in a parenthetical remark,—‘ Jesus being (as was reputed) the son of Joseph, (*but in reality*) the son of Heli,’ or his grandson by the mother's side; for so the ellipsis should be supplied.

Furthermore, Mary is always called by the Jews ‘ the daughter of Heli ;’ and by the early Christian writers, ‘ the daughter of Joakim and Anna.’ Now, *Joakim* and *Eliakim* (as different names in Hebrew for God) are sometimes interchanged; so that Heli or Eli is an abridged form of Eliakim interchanged for Joakim.

These observations may suffice to indicate the heads of a discussion involving much curious matter, tending, as all discussion does, in the long run, to the vindication of the sacred

writers, even in those of their statements that may, at first view, seem the most inconsistent.

One of the lines is therefore the natural and legal line of Joseph's descent; and the other a reputed line, arising from his adoption by the father assigned to him in it, or by his marriage with the daughter. An adopted son inherited all the rights of a natural son. If, therefore, a man had a daughter only, the person who married her became virtually his son, and, as such, was reckoned in the genealogy; so that, although descents could not be reckoned by females, yet the name of a man who had only a daughter was not lost in Israel, as the husband assumed his wife's genealogy, and took his place in the roll as the son of her father. The conclusion then is, that one of these genealogies is that of Joseph, and the other that of his wife Mary; both lines being preserved to show definitely that Jesus was, in the most full and perfect sense, a descendant of David; not only by law in the royal line of kings through his reputed father, but by direct personal descent through his mother.

### *Twenty-ninth Week—Fourth Day.*

INCARNATION.—JOHN I. 14.

It is very often stated, and as often admitted, that the idea of an incarnation of the Deity is not peculiar to Christianity, and is in fact common in oriental mythology. In this view we for a time indolently acquiesced, and were content to rest upon the essential differences between the incarnations of the Hindu gods and that of the Messiah. But on looking more closely into the matter, after venturing to assume the possibility that even great authorities might be mistaken, we feel inclined to deny that there is in eastern mythology any incarnation in any sense approaching that of the Christian, and that least of all is there any, where it has been most insisted on.

In the Hindu religion there are numerous *avatars* of the gods, commonly, but erroneously, translated *incarnations*. But

avatar means a *descent*; and the three great gods, their consorts, their offspring, and numerous other mythological personages, are represented as *descending* in human, in animal, or in a compound monstrous form, for some special objects, such as to reward righteousness, and to redress and punish wrong. These are mostly such transformations, or assumptions of form, as we read of in classical mythology, and which no one has thought of comparing with the Christian incarnation. But when we speak of Hindu *avatars*, we think mainly of the ten avatars of Vishnu—nine past and one to come. Even here, however, we find the same want of proper analogy to the real idea of the divine incarnation; and we see, moreover, that the incarnation of Christ is effectual *once for all*, whereas these heathen gods are continually *descending* to set right things that have gone out of joint. In one of Vishnu's avatars, the god becomes a gigantic man-boar to draw up the earth from the ocean in which it had been submerged; he appears in another as a mighty man-tortoise to sustain the globe, which was convulsed by the malignant potency of demons; in a third, he veils his glory in the form of a devouring man-lion, and, rushing from a pillar of marble, rescues a religious son from an impious father, and destroys the father to vindicate the majesty of offended justice. The fabulists with whom these singular fictions originated, proceed with equal or greater wantonness of fancy to detail various other descents of the divine nature. The last two avatars (if they be two, for some think them essentially the same) are those which alone can be said to make a distant approach to our ground. In these the god is born of woman, that is to say, instead of taking possession of the form of an adult, he takes possession of an unborn infant; and the child of human parents is born into the world, and grows up through childhood to youth and manhood. The first of these two is that of Khrishna, to which we have formerly referred,<sup>1</sup> in the representations of whom, as a child, have occurred those supposed pictorial resemblances to the Virgin and Child of the Roman Catholic painters. But this sort of analogy must always

<sup>1</sup> Morning Series, Third Week—Second Day.

exist where a woman, with a child at her bosom, is depicted ; and in the case before us, the female figure is not that of the mother Devaki, as some imagine, but of the foster-mother Yesuda. In the last avatar, that of Vishnu as of Budha, it is even questioned whether the god was born a child or not ; for, according to some accounts, he appeared at once as a shepherd boy. In either case, after a career of unutterable carnality, mingled with heroic achievements and redress of wrongs, he returns to the joys of his celestial mansion, having imparted all moral and political precepts to his favoured followers. The particulars are throughout as different as heaven is from earth ; and it may be regretted that the details which show the complete difference between the gospel and the Hindu idea of an incarnation of the Deity, are too revolting to be cited in a book like this.<sup>1</sup>

In none of the Hindu legends to which we refer, is the mother a virgin, and in the most striking of them she has already borne seven children. These facts render it clear that the most pointed incident in the history of our Lord's incarnation could not be derived from the mythology of the far East, as some have dared to allege ; and even they admit that *this* circumstance affords no trace of *Jewish* invention, since among that people marriage was held in the highest esteem, and celibacy in disrespect ; and it is allowed that they never did, and do not now, expect the Messiah to be born of a virgin. If, therefore, it were not a fact, no basis, either on Jewish or on heathen ground, could be discovered for it as an invention or myth.

But heathendom, we shall be told, is not exhausted. There is Budhism, which offers still more striking analogies, so that it has been sometimes carelessly called 'the Christianity of the

<sup>1</sup> The ten *avatars* are usually thus arranged : 1. Matsya, the fish, or man-fish. 2. Kurma, the tortoise, or man-tortoise. 3. Varaha, the boar, or man-boar. 4. Narasingha, the lion, or man-lion. 5. Vamana, or the dwarf. 6. Parasu Rama, the name of the favoured person in whom Vishnu became incarnate. 7. Sre-Ram, the same. 8. Khrishna, the same. 9. Budh, the same. 10. Kalki, the horse, or man-horse. Observe, it is a question between the Brahminical and Budhist sects, whether the Budh of the ninth avatar is the same with the founder of Budhism or not.





remote East.' Is it not on record that Budh was born of a woman—born of a virgin? So were the Fohi of China, and the Sckaka of Thibet, no doubt the same, whether a mythic or a real personage. We are also told that the Jesuits in China were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country the counterpart of the 'Virgo Deipara.' One, referring to this, adds: 'There is something very curious in the appearance of the same religious notions in remote and apparently disconnected countries, where it is impossible to trace the secret manner of their transmission.'<sup>1</sup> The resemblance we have in certain points allowed formerly, as in the traditions respecting the Creation, the Fall, and the Deluge; and we found all this adequately accounted for, by the heritage of common primitive traditions held by all the races of men descended from that one family which survived the deluge; and we might have no difficulty in referring to the same source the matter now under consideration, regarding them as embodied traditions of the promise made to the woman that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. Indeed, we ourselves have referred to this source certain circumstances in the history of the Hindu Krishna.<sup>2</sup> But what we now inquire after are analogies of the *Incarnation*, which, in the gospel sense, was not likely to be deduced from that promise by the *heathen* descendants of Noah, seeing that the Jews themselves did not deduce it.

Now, if the gospel idea of the incarnation be that of God descending to take upon himself, in the womb of a woman, man's entire nature—to become a man such as we are, 'yet without sin,'—there is as little of this in Budhism as in Brahminism, and indeed far less. In the latter, the god does at least descend—does at least lower himself to earth. But Budhism has no god to descend; and Budh must be born of woman, not as God *descending* to take upon Him flesh, but as man *rising* to take upon him a kind of temporary godhead. Instead of similarity, therefore, we find the greatest contrariety between these two things.

<sup>1</sup> MILMAN'S *History of Christianity*, i. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Morning Series, Third Week—Second Day.

Let us try to make this clear.

Budh is the name for God, not of any god in particular. There have been several Budhs, and there will be one more. And here we may remark how all systems concur in the belief that the world is near or is approaching its last ages. Brahminism expects but one more avatar of Vishnu ; Buddhism looks for but one more Budh to arise. At large intervals of time, men have appeared, who, in transmigrations through long ages, from one form of being and one state of life to another, and behaving increasingly well in each, have gone on accumulating an immense stock of merits, and higher degrees of sanctity, till they are at length born into a state of supernatural knowledge and power—have in fact attained perfection, and can go no higher, and therefore, after the next death, are born no more, but pass into annihilation. It is while he exists in this final state on earth, previous to annihilation, that this personage is Budh, and is worshipped as a god, and after his death he continues to be worshipped, not as a present god, but as a memory ; and the rules and precepts which he has left, form the rule of life, worship, and religion for the people, till the next Budh appears. Thus the system is practical atheism, built on a foundation of human merits. Its god is dead, and its final hope is annihilation. Where is the resemblance to Christianity—where any analogy to the incarnation—in all this ?

It is a system in which the incarnation of the Godhead is a simple impossibility, there being no god to incarnate ; Budh being merely an eminent saint exalted into a demigod. If, therefore, we should hear stories of preternatural conceptions, or even of births from virgins, in the case of Budhs and Buddhist saints, these have nothing at all to do with the subject, that is, with the incarnation of the Godhead, seeing that they are avowedly circumstances conferring honours upon the birth of a mortal ; and the only biblical facts to which they will bear comparison, are the births of Isaac, of Samson, of the son of the woman of Shunem, and of John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The last Budh was Gaudama, born son of a king in Hindustan about the year 626 B.C. He had previously lived in four hundred millions of

*Twenty-ninth Week—Fifth Day.*

CHRISTIANITY AND BUDHISM.—JOHN I. 14.

THE subject which last evening engaged our attention, seems to us to have acquired so much importance from the evil use that has been made of these alleged eastern incarnations, that we are anxious to set forth just so much of explanation in

worlds, and passed through innumerable conditions in each. In *this* world he had been almost every sort of worm, fly, fish, or animal, and almost every grade or condition in life. Having in the course of these transmigrations attained immense merit, he was at length



born son of the king mentioned. The moment he was born he jumped upon his feet, and spreading out his arms exclaimed, "Now I am the noblest of men! This is the last time I shall ever be born." His height when grown up was nine cubits. His ears were so beautifully long as to hang upon his shoulders; his hands reached to his knees; his fingers were of equal length; and with his tongue he could touch the end of his nose. All of which were deemed irrefragable proofs of his divinity. When in this state his mind was enlarged, so that he remembered his former conditions and existence. Of these he rehearsed many to his followers. Five hundred and fifty of these narratives have been preserved; one relating his life and adventures as a deer, another as a monkey, elephant, fowl, etc. The collection is called *Dyat*, and forms a very considerable part of the sacred books. Gaudama became Budh in the thirty-fifth year of his age, and

remained so forty-five years, at the end of which time, having performed all sorts of meritorious deeds, and promulgated his laws far and wide, he obtained *Nicban*, that is, he entered into annihilation, together with 500 priests by whom he had been long attended.

'The next Budh is to appear about seven or eight thousand years from the present time. His height will be eighty cubits; his mouth will be five cubits wide, and the length of the hair of his eyebrows five cubits.'—REV. HOWARD MALCOLM'S *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*.

regard to it, as may prevent the reader from being confused by the different forms of Budhism which his reading may bring under his notice.

Let it then be understood that what we have described is the orthodox form of this religion. But there is a very extensive Budhist sect prevalent in Tartary, to the very frontiers of Europe, in whose creed the strongest analogies to Christianity have been fancied. Their principles are the same with those formerly described ; but these sectaries worship a living not a dead Budh. They hold that Budh did not at his death pass into annihilation, but transmigrated into another body—that of a child born about the time of his death ; and hence when the Budh or Dalai Lama dies, the priests cease not till they have found the child whose person he has taken. Such children, when found, are often reported to have been born under extraordinary circumstances, and hence the story of virgin-born Budhs. The same things are related of certain inferior Budhs or Lamas, for there are many local ones ; and indeed, by the principles of this sect, which dispenses with the crowning glory of annihilation, there is no reason why several persons should not at the same time be in possession of, or in progress towards, the state of Budhist perfection.

Here, then, we get rid, as we conceive very completely, of oriental incarnations ; and it only remains to dispose of the other resemblances to Christianity, or rather to Roman Catholicism, which so astounded the Jesuits in China. This it is our privilege to be able to do on the evidence of two other Jesuits (Gabet and Huc), who were similarly astonished, and the last named of whom has lately presented the public with a most interesting and valuable account of unexplored regions in Tartary. The Budhism of this region, it appears, had its reformer in the fourteenth century in the person of one Tsong-Kaba, who may easily be supposed to have derived his inspiration from Romish missionaries.

At the period mentioned, a shepherd of the land of Amdo, named Lombo-Moke, had set up his black tent at the foot of a mountain, near the entrance to a deep ravine, through which,

over a rocky bed, meandered an abundant stream. Lombo-Moke shared with his wife Chingtsa-Tsio the cares of pastoral life. They possessed no numerous flocks ; some twenty goats, and a few sarligues or long-haired cattle, constituted all their wealth. For many years they had lived alone and childless in these wild solitudes. But one day Chingtsa-Tsio, having descended to the bottom of the ravine to draw water, experienced a faintness, and fell senseless on a large stone, which bore inscribed on it various characters in honour of the Budha Chukdja Mouni. When Chingtsa-Tsio came to herself, she felt a pain in the side, and at once comprehended that the fall had rendered her fruitful. Nine months after this mysterious event, she brought into the world a son, whom Lombo-Moke named Tsong-Kaba, from the mountain at whose foot his tent had stood for several years. The marvellous child had at his birth a white beard, and his face wore an air of extraordinary majesty. There was nothing childlike about his manners. So soon as he saw the light he was capable of expressing himself in the language of Amdo with clearness and precision. He spoke little, indeed ; but his words always developed a profound appreciation of the nature and destiny of man.

At the age of three, Tsong-Kaba resolved to renounce the world and embrace the religious life. His mother, full of respect for the holy project of her son, herself shaved his head, and cast his long flowing hair outside the tent. From this hair there forthwith sprang a tree, the wood of which dispensed an exquisite perfume around, and each leaf of which bore engraved on its surface a character in the sacred language of Thibet. Tsong-Kaba himself withdrew into the most absolute retirement, avoiding even the presence of his parents. He took up his position on the summit of the wildest mountains, or in the depths of the profoundest ravines, and there spent whole days and nights in prayer, and in the contemplation of eternal things. His fastings were long and frequent. He respected the life even of the humblest insect, and rigorously interdicted himself the use of any sort of flesh whatever. While the saint was thus engaged in purifying his heart by assiduity and prayer,

and by the practices of an austere life, a *Lama from one of the most remote regions of the West* visited the land of Amdo, and received the hospitalities of Lombo-Moke's tent. Tsong-Kaba, amazed at the science and sanctity of the stranger, prostrated himself at his feet, and besought him to become his instructor. The Lamaic traditions relate that this Lama of the West was remarkable not only for his learning, the profundity of which was unfathomable, but for the singularity of his appearance. People especially remarked his great nose, and his eyes that gleamed with a supernatural fire. The stranger being, on his part, not less struck with the marvellous qualities of Tsong-Kaba, did not hesitate to adopt him as his disciple, and for this purpose took up his abode in the land of Amdo, where, however, he lived only a few years. After having initiated the people in all the doctrines recognised by the most renowned saints of the West, he fell asleep one day on a stone upon the summit of a mountain, and his eyes opened not again.

Tsong-Kaba, deprived of the holy stranger's lessons, but still athirst for religious instruction, ere long determined to abandon his tribe, and proceed to the farther West, that he might drink at their very source the pure precepts of sacred science. He actually made some progress in his journey, when he was met by a spirit all radiant with light, who forbade his proceeding farther. At this place disciples in great numbers gathered round this extraordinary man ; and the new doctrines he taught, and the innovations he introduced into the Lamaic worship, began to create considerable excitement. At length Tsong-Kaba resolutely put himself forward as a reformer, and began to make open war upon the ancient worship. His partisans increased from day to day, and came to be known as the yellow-cap Lamas, in contradistinction to the red-cap Lamas, who supported the old system. Eventually the then living Budh, after much opposition, gave in his adhesion ; and from that time the reformed doctrine encountered no obstacle, and became, by insensible degrees, firmly established in all the realms of Tartary.

Now, it is a reasonable inference, that all the analogies to

Christianity which are to be found in the Buddhism of this region, and which doubtless constituted the reforms introduced by Tsong-Kaba, are due to the instructions of the stranger from the West, in whom we cannot fail to recognise a Roman Catholic missionary, if only by his long and prominent nose—a feature exceedingly suited to attract the special attention of the short-nosed Tartar natives. M. Huc himself is clear in this opinion, and all but demonstrates its truth. But that he has anticipated us in the essential conclusion, we should be ready to show, from materials industriously collected many years ago, that it was not until the thirteenth century that the spiritual dynasty of the Grand Lama was established in Thibet with its existing forms of worship; and that, prior to this, that region had been in immediate contact with Christianity, having, through the labours of French and Italian missionaries, and the visits of ambassadors and agents from western courts to the Tartar emperors, acquired a familiarity with the forms of Romish worship, and gained some general notions of Christian doctrine. It will be remarked that those who have noticed these analogies have always been Romish missionaries. A Protestant missionary would find little on the same ground which would strike him as furnishing a resemblance to Christianity; though, if versed in the practices of the Romish Church, and if not tracing the line of connection between the two, he would consider that he had discovered another series of analogies between heathenism and Popery.

But let us hear M. Huc.

‘Upon the most superficial examination of the reforms and innovations introduced by Tsong-Kaba into the Lamanesque worship, one must be struck with their affinity to Catholicism. The cross, the mitre, the dulmatica, the cope, which the Grand Lamas wear in their journeys, or when they are performing some ceremony out of the temple; the service with double choirs, the psalmody, the exercises, the censer suspended from five chains, and which you can open or close at pleasure; the benediction given by the Lama, by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful; the chaplet, ecclesiastical celibacy, spiritual retirement, the worship of the saints, the fasts,

the processions, the litanies, the holy water,—all these are analogies between the Budhists and ourselves. Now, can it be said these analogies are of Christian origin? We think so.



We have indeed found, neither in the traditions nor in the monuments of the country, any positive proof of their adoption ; still it is perfectly legitimate to put forward conjectures, which have all the characters of the most emphatic probability.

‘It is known that in the fourteenth century, at the time of the domination of the Mongol emperors, there existed frequent relations between the Europeans and the people of Upper Asia. We have already, in the former part of our narrative, referred to those celebrated embassies which the Tartar conquerors sent to Rome, to France, and to England. There is no doubt that the barbarians who thus visited Europe must have been struck with the pomp and splendour of the ceremonies of the Catholic worship, and must have carried back with them into the desert enduring memories of what they had seen. On the other hand, it is also known that, at the same period, brethren of various religious orders undertook remote pilgrimages for the purpose of introducing Christianity into Tartary ; and these must have penetrated at the same time into



Thibet among the Si-Fan, and among the Mongols on the Blue Sea. Jean de Montcorvin, Archbishop of Peking, had already organized a choir of Mongol monks, who daily practised the recitation of the psalms, and the ceremonies of the Catholic faith. Now, if one reflects that Tsong-Kaba lived precisely at the period when the Christian religion was being introduced into Central Asia, it will be no longer matter of astonishment that we find, in reformed Buddhism, such striking analogies with Christianity.

‘And may we not proceed to lay down a proposition of a more positive character? This very legend of Tsong-Kaba, which we heard in the very place of his birth, and from the mouth of several Lamas, does it not materially strengthen our theory? Setting aside all the marvellous features which have been added to the story by the imagination of the Lamas, it may be fairly admitted that Tsong-Kaba was a man raised above the ordinary level by his genius, and also, perhaps, by his virtue; that he was instructed by a stranger from the West; that, after the death of the master, the disciple, proceeding to the West, took up his abode in Thibet, where he diffused the instruction which he himself had received. May it not be reasonably inferred that this stranger with the great nose was an European, one of those Catholic missionaries who, at that precise period, penetrated in such numbers into Upper Asia? It is by no means surprising that Lamanesque traditions should have preserved the memory of that European face, whose type is so different from that of the Asiatics. During our abode at Kounboun, we more than once heard the Lamas make remarks upon the singularity of our features, and say, roundly, that we were of the same land with the master of Tsong-Kaba. It may be further supposed that a premature death did not permit the Catholic missionary to complete the religious education of his disciple, who himself, when afterwards he became an apostle, merely applied himself, whether from having acquired only an incomplete knowledge of Christian doctrine, or from having apostatized from it, to the introduction of a new Buddhist liturgy.’

After having thus shown that there are no incarnations in Buddhism ; that the Budhs themselves are merely eminent saints ; that there is an utter disparity of doctrine between Buddhism and Christianity ; and that the ritual analogies observable in certain Buddhist countries are fairly traceable to Romanist influence and teaching in the middle ages,—we ought in fairness to hear no more of such analogies, with a view of reducing the peculiarities of the gospel dispensation to the low level of some heathenish standard.

Besides, the Christian doctrine of the incarnation is to be taken along with that of the atonement. These are essentially parts of the same great idea ; and the idea of the Incarnate Being conquering, overcoming, redeeming, by passive submission to persecution, stripes, ignominy, and death, is strange to ancient heathendom, which had nothing even remotely analogous to ‘the offence of the cross,’ without which, in the Christian point of view, the doctrine of the incarnation would lose nearly all its force and significance.

### Twenty-ninth Week—Sixth Day.

THE YEAR.—MATTHEW II. I.

How long ago was our Lord born ?

Some will smile at this question, and will answer it by another question ; ‘Does not the date of the present year answer that very plainly ? Eighteen hundred and fifty-two years since, of course.’

Then, in what year was our Lord born ?

‘In the year *one*, of course,’ some will answer.

‘In the year *o*, of course,’ others will affirm.

Then here, to begin with, is a year’s difference, seeing that some count one at the moment Christ was born, while others do not count one till the first year of his life had expired.

But there is a greater difference still. A marginal note at the head of our English New Testaments informs us, that Jesus

was born in the 'fourth year before the account called *Anno Domini*;' by which account, therefore, it would seem that the year of our Lord which we call 1852 is really 1856—leaving us to infer that the person who first calculated the year of Christ's birth was mistaken to this extent. Nor should this surprise us, seeing that the calculation was not made until the sixth century—a most unscientific and uncritical age. It was not until then that the usage of counting from the birth of Christ began, and it was but slowly that it acquired prevalence; so that although, with differences, it was generally established in the eighth century, it cannot be said to have become universal in Christendom until the fifteenth.

Lately the whole question has been re-examined by continental and English scholars with much care; and although the *precise year* of our Lord's birth is still uncertain, a reasonably near approximation has been attained. The safest process, indeed the only attainable one, is to find, as nearly as we may, the year of Rome in which the event occurred. For this there are certain data in the Gospels and in Josephus, which, without leading us to absolute certainty, will not allow us to go far astray. We will endeavour to state these data very briefly. As a preliminary, it may be well to remind the reader that the first year of the present vulgar era coincides with the year 753 of the building of Rome (A.U.).

According to Matthéw ii. 1, Jesus was born in the reign of Herod the Great, and not long before his death. Now, Herod died in the year of Rome 750, just before the Passover. If, then, we make an allowance of time for the purification, the visit of the magi, the flight into Egypt, and the remaining there till Herod was dead—for all which *not less* than six months can well be required,—it will follow that the birth of Christ cannot in any case be fixed *later* than the autumn of the year of Rome 749, being four years before the present era.

Again, Luke (iii. 1, 2) says, that John the Baptist entered upon his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; and, further on (iii. 23), that Jesus was 'about thirty years of age' at the time of his baptism by John. Now if, as is quite likely, John

commenced his ministry at the same age as Jesus, we may, by reckoning back thirty years, ascertain the time of John's birth, and consequently that of Jesus, who is known to have been six months younger. Now, reckoning from the death of Augustus, in the year of Rome 767, the fifteenth year of Tiberius, who succeeded him, commenced August 29, A.U. 781; and going back thirty years, we find that John must have been born not earlier than August 29, A.U. 751, and our Lord of course not earlier than A.U. 752—a result differing by three years from that obtained from Matthew. But Tiberius had been associated with Augustus in the empire certainly two years, and probably three, before the death of the latter; and if, as may be well presumed, Luke reckons from this the commencement of the reign of Tiberius, the date deduced from his statement coincides entirely with that drawn from Matthew.

Further, in John ii. 20, the Jews say, 'Forty and six years was this temple in building. Now, Herod commenced the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, coinciding with A.U. 732. If, therefore, our Lord was, at the time of his first Passover, forty-seven years after, as is probable, thirty and a half years of age, this would carry back the year of his birth to the autumn of the year of Rome 748.

Moreover, a tradition preserved by the Latin fathers, on a point wherein authentic information was easily obtainable by them, makes the *death* of Christ to have taken place in the consulship of L. Rubellius and C. Fufius, that is, in A.U. 782. If, therefore, the duration of our Lord's ministry was three and a half years, making his age thirty-three and a half at the time of his death, this takes us back to the same date of 748 A.U.

From the concurrence of all these data, it would appear that the birth of our Lord cannot have taken place later than the year of Rome 749; but it may have been a year or two earlier, if we suppose the period of six months too short to cover the interval between the birth of Jesus and the return of the family from Egypt, on hearing of Herod's death. Some think that it could not have been less than one, two, or three years. Taking all things into account, we suppose it could not well have been

less than between one and two years. The uncertainty on this point seems the sole remaining difficulty. And the result is, that the birth of our Lord must have been at least four years anterior to the present era, and may have been a year or two more. Upon the whole, we do not feel satisfied with less than a year more, and this would throw back the true date five years before the present era ; so that the present year of 1852 would be actually the 1857th year since the birth of our Lord.

Mr. Lewin has calculated the time of the nativity by another process, which it may be well to state to the reader. His words are as follows : ‘ The temple was burned by Titus, according to the Rabbins, on Saturday, 9th Ab, or 4th August A.D. 70, the very day that the course of Jehoiarib, the first of the twenty-four courses, entered upon its office. The courses served *seriatim* for a week at a time, and entered upon their office upon the first day of the week ; and it confirms the statement of the Rabbins, that if the first course began on the first day of the seventh month of the first year of Cyrus (see Ezra i. 1 ; iii. 6), found by calculation to be 24th September B.C. 536, the first course would again commence its duties on 4th August A.D. 70. Zacharias was of the course of Abia or Abijah (Luke i. 5), which was the eighth course (1 Chron. xxiv. 10). During the interval from B.C. 7 to A.D. 70, there occurred nothing to interrupt the order of the courses ; and if so, then, as the course of Jehoiarib began on 4th August A.D. 70, the course of Abia began on 16th May B.C. 7, and ended on 22d May B.C. 7. The conception of John the Baptist was at the close of the course, and therefore about 22d May B.C. 7. . . . The birth of John would thus be about 22d February B.C. 6. The conception of the Virgin was in the sixth month after that of Elisabeth ; and therefore the nativity would be in the sixth month after the birth of John, or about 1st August B.C. 6,<sup>1</sup> corresponding to A.U. 748.

### *Twenty-ninth Week—Seventh Day.*

THE DAY.—LUKE II. 11.

THERE are many who do, and many who do not, observe the twenty-fifth of December as the day of our Lord's birth ; but

<sup>1</sup> *Fasti Sacri.*

those who refuse to celebrate the event on that day, are influenced not so much by any question about the correctness of the time, as by conscientious scruples respecting the observance, as a religious festival, of any day not distinctly appointed on scriptural authority. So that, upon the whole, it may be considered that Christendom generally deems the day mentioned to have been the birth-day of our Lord, though all Christendom does not celebrate it as such.

Yet, in fact, the time of the year in which Jesus was born is quite as uncertain as the year itself; perhaps it is more uncertain, as the notes of time in the sacred narrative are fewer and less distinct. The question is one of little importance even for those who observe the day, as the celebration of a public event is not necessarily confined to the day of the year on which it actually occurred. The formal celebration of the birth-day of our own sovereign is, with a view to public convenience, often appointed for another day and month than those on which it actually occurred. The question is, however, one of some biblical interest, if only from the natural wish to know whether the various circumstances attending and following our Lord's birth did or did not take place in the depth of winter.

It is clear that a celebration of the day of Christ's nativity was not thought of in the earliest ages of the Christian church. When it was at last considered proper, no clue or tradition existed as to the real time, which had to be determined with reference to probabilities, of which we are as competent to judge as the founders of the festival were, and perhaps more competent, from the more severely critical tendencies of our age.

We strongly think that there is no satisfactory evidence as to the time of the year, and still less as to the precise day; and it appears to us that the season, and consequently the day, have been determined on erroneous and uncritical data. There is no one now who will stand up for either the season or the day usually observed. Neither has even ancient tradition or practice in its favour. It would seem that the earliest writer who alludes to the matter was Clement of Alexandria, who wrote

about the middle of the third century, and speaks with compassionate scorn of the attempts made by persons in his time to fix, not only the precise year, but the exact day, of Christ's birth, as to both of which he considered such attempts futile and impracticable. As there could have been no object in fixing the day of our Lord's birth but to make the anniversary of it a festival, the discussion of the question in Clement's times may be regarded as the first indication of a tendency in this direction ; and we know from other sources that it was not until about this period that there was *any* celebration of the nativity of Christ in the western church ; while it is well known that there was nothing of the kind in the eastern churches till towards the end of the fourth century. These churches had but one festival bearing any reference to the appearance of Christ, and that was the feast of the Epiphany, then regarded (for it has since acquired another meaning) as celebrating the commencement of our Lord's ministry at his baptism by John in the Jordan. When the Christmas festival, as the anniversary of our Lord's birth, came to them from the West, they at first resisted it strenuously ; but at length they accepted the anniversary, though not the day, choosing rather to connect it, properly enough, with their own old festival of the Manifestation, and therefore celebrating the Lord's nativity on the 6th of January instead of the 25th of December.

Thus we see there is, in fact, no authority of tradition for the time of the year or the day of the year. How it came to be fixed to the 25th of December, seems to have happened thus : It was thought, most erroneously, that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was high-priest, and that when the angel appeared to him in the temple, it was on the Day of Atonement, on which day only the high priest went into the inner sanctuary, to make expiation for the sins of the people, by sprinkling the blood of atonement before and upon the ark. A greater error was never made ; as it is clear that Zacharias was an ordinary priest, who, in the due course of service, went into the *outer* sanctuary to offer the daily incense. But the mistake being made, the reasoning went on thus : The Day of Atonement

being in September, John would be born in June ; but John was six months older than Jesus, who, therefore, must have been born in December. This we firmly believe to be the basis, so worthless and unsubstantial, on which the opinion of our Lord's birth having occurred in December has been raised.

As little satisfactory is the process suggested by Sir Isaac Newton, as having been the one probably followed by those who first began to celebrate this and other festivals. He supposes that they designedly distributed to the cardinal points of the year the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, the Feasts of St. Michael and of John the Baptist, with this of the birth of our Saviour—these having been at first appointed to the places which they still occupy in the calendar, as being respectively the days of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and of the summer and winter solstices.

As, therefore, it is admitted on all hands, that the real day of the nativity is beyond the reach of calculation, it is open to us to acknowledge, that all the circumstances seem unfavourable to its having been in winter. It was little likely that the Romans would heighten the unpopularity of an intrinsically unpopular measure, by constraining a large part of the population to travel at that time of the year. Still less is it likely that Mary, in her delicate condition, would have accompanied her husband on a long journey in the inclement weather belonging to that season. The same objection arises still more strongly from this being the season for the journey to Egypt—for there was then a new-born infant, the distance was far greater, and the season still less favourable—for if the birth was at the close of December, this journey must have been in February. The fact that the shepherds were abroad with their flocks at night in the open air, is also against that supposition. The cold of the night during winter is too severe in Palestine to make this practicable. It is true, that the sheep might remain in the open air at night, as they do in much severer climates. But then they are folded in pens or cotes near the homestead, and have no need of night watchers ; for it is only when feeding at large



in the open pastures during the milder seasons, that there is need of this night attendance of shepherds. It requires to be well noticed, that there appear to have been several shepherds in charge of the flock, which alone seems to indicate what was *not* the time of the year. What it *was* it is more difficult to say. Those who dissent from the existing conclusion usually name some time about either the vernal or autumnal equinox. We should be inclined to prefer the latter—somewhere about the Feast of Tabernacles. The comparative leisure which the conclusion of the labours of the agricultural year afforded to a large part of the population, rendered this a favourite season for journeying and visiting among the Jews, and it was therefore more likely than any other to be selected for the registration of the people; which could not well have been made at any other time, without causing some of the useful and important labours of the field to be interrupted,—a result which must have appeared quite as little desirable to the Romans as to the Jews themselves.

Upon the whole, we are clearly of opinion that December is one of the three least likely months of the twelve in which the birth of our Saviour could be fixed; and that, in the absence of any adequate materials for a *definite* conclusion, the month of September may be indicated as affording some probabilities which can scarcely be advanced in favour of any other.



## Thirtieth Week—First Day.

THE NAME OF JESUS.—LUKE II. 21.

THE evangelist is careful to inform us that, on the eighth day from his birth, the child was circumcised according to the law.

Several reasons have been advanced by learned divines for our Lord's submission to a rite which was not, in any of its spiritual significance, needful to Him. Circumcision was, as we know, designed to signify 'the putting away of the body of the sins of the flesh,' by the circumcision of the heart, which is the only thing that God regards as of real worth. Yet Christ, who, born without sin, required no regenerating process, submitted to this humiliating rite. By this He gave full proof of the reality of his human nature, showing that He was made flesh to dwell among us—in all things like unto his brethren,—and was not a mere phantom or spirit, or an angel, as some in a later age ventured to suppose. It was a proof that He was of the promised seed, the seed of Abraham. It was a mark of his regular initiation into the Jewish church, in which every man-child was circumcised. It was a removal of what the Jews would have regarded as the scandal of uncircumcision. Without this rite Jesus would have been driven from the thresholds of their temple, their synagogues, and their dwellings, as unclean and profane. But the principal reason appears to be this: Circumcision was one of the matters which the law enjoined, and regarded as of essential importance; had it therefore been neglected in his case, He could not have been made in all things 'obedient unto the law.' Besides, being born in the likeness of sinful man, He, by his submission to this rite, gave public testimony that He would fulfil the whole law for us; for 'every man that is circumcised is a debtor to do the

whole law.' 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'

It was a custom among the Jews, that the child should receive its name at the time it was circumcised. No law enjoined this ; but the fitness of the practice was thought to be fairly deducible from the circumstance that Abram's name was changed to Abraham—that is, the new name of Abraham was given to him at the time the rite was instituted.

Accordingly, it was then that our Lord received the name of Jesus.

It was usual, as we have seen in the case of John the Baptist, for the name to be settled by the parents, with or without friendly discussion with, and suggestion from, the friends and neighbours who might be invited to attend the ceremony. But in this case there could have been few friends to adorn the occasion with their presence ; and if there had been a hundred, their discussions would have had no influence upon the name, as both Mary and Joseph felt it to be a solemn duty to bestow upon the child no other name than that which had been imparted to each of them by the angel before he was born. Everything relating to the Christ was of importance ; and his name was of peculiar interest, especially among a people who attached so much consequence to the meanings of proper names as did the Jews. It was avowedly from such fitness of signification that the name was bestowed : 'Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for He shall SAVE his people from their sins.' Jesus means Saviour, or Deliverer ; and hence the fitness of the designation for One who had in reality undertaken this high function.

It was not a new name framed for the occasion. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua ; and in its same Greek form it occurs as the name of the author of one of the Apocryphal books—'Jesus, the son of Sirach.' The newly-born infant had, however, a claim to the name, with special emphasis of meaning, such as no one who ever bore it possessed or pretended to. To save his people from their sins, is

what no one but He could do ; and this entitles Him pre-eminently to the name of SAVIOUR, and teaches us that deliverance from sin is the only real salvation.

Syrian and Egyptian kings have assumed the name of Saviour (Soter) as a distinguishing title ; and many, in various lands, have been hailed as ' the saviours of their country ; ' but this was only with reference to deliverance from foreign bondage or internecine war. No man was ever yet so called because he delivered the human mind from its bondage—none but this One, because He came to deliver the human race from its captivity to sin. Such a saviour as they were, and such as He was not, the Jews expected ; and had He appeared as such, to deliver them from the yoke of Rome, they would have hailed Him with shouts, and gathered to his standard like bees to their hive. But because He professed no more than to save them from their sins, they looked darkly on Him, and denounced Him even unto death as an impostor. They did not want to be delivered from their sins—they did not feel the burden of them ; and they craved far more for temporal and political salvation. Alas for them ! and for us too, alas ! It is easy to pity and condemn these Jews ; but let us look nearer home, and the loud tongue may sink into whispering humbleness. We may see how many, even in this Christendom, that bear his name, fail to recognise Him heartily—and no other recognition is of any worth—as Him who came to save them from their sins. We see how many there are who, indeed, decently acknowledge the surpassing greatness of this salvation ; but who, if they ventured to speak plainly to their own hearts, would confess that deliverance from want, from pain, from trouble ; salvation from civil, political, or military thralldom, are of really far greater importance in their eyes than deliverance from their sins. When Christ said to the Jews that He came to make them free, they remarked that they were not in bondage. Then He told them, that he who lived in sin was the servant of sin ; but ' if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed ; ' intimating that there is no true freedom, no real salvation, but this.

'He is the freeman whom the [Son] makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.'

And the man who has received from this great Saviour the charter of his deliverance, has obtained a freedom which man's utmost wit or malice cannot touch ; and which, in poverty, in distress, amid persecution, upon the bed of pain, in the low dungeon, can make him triumphant, exultant, free, in the conscious enjoyment of that salvation from his sins, which the Saviour won for him so dearly—of that liberty with which Christ makes his people free—the liberty of the sons of God.

Thus taken in its fulness of meaning—SAVIOUR—the name of Jesus becomes very precious. It is the sign and symbol of our faith and hope. It can throw a gleam over our sorrows and afflictions, and impart a holy and heavenly character to our joys. It can banish the dreariness of solitude, and give to social life its highest charm. It can invigorate the labours of the day, and sweeten the repose or mitigate the restlessness of the night. In life, it is a never-failing fund of delight. It cheers, or solaces, the hour of death ; and it becomes the source of that unflinching confidence with which we look forward to the solemnities of the last day. 'This is the name which we should engrave in our hearts, and write upon our foreheads, and pronounce with our most harmonious accents, and rest our faith upon, and place our hopes in, and love with the overflowings of charity, joy, and adoration.'<sup>1</sup>

### *Thirtieth Week—Second Day.*

THE PRESENTATION.—LUKE II. 22-24.

UNDER the law there were two ceremonies which required that Mary, with her husband and child, should be present in Jerusalem, and at the temple, within forty days after the birth of Jesus.

The first was the presentation of the child as the first-born

<sup>1</sup> JEREMY TAYLOR, *Great Exemplar*, p. 63.

before the Lord in the temple, for which the presence of father and child was needed ; the other was the ceremony of the purification of the mother, for which her presence alone was necessary. Had not the child, therefore, been the first-born, the presence of the father and child would not have been needed ; both were, however, usually present at Jerusalem even in that case. The child, because it could not be parted from the mother's breast ; and the father to take care of his wife and child.

There was legally ten days' interval between the two ceremonies—the presentation of the first-born being on the thirtieth day, and the purification on the fortieth. But these times were not rigidly enforced. The woman, however, was subject to considerable inconvenience by remaining in a state of ceremonial uncleanness until she had undergone legal purification, and therefore was always anxious not to protract the time, which simply could not be *earlier* than the fortieth day ; so the presentation could not be before the thirtieth day, but might be after. On the thirtieth day the fee of redemption for the first-born became due, whether the child were presented or not, but it might be paid later ; and if it were paid sooner in anticipation, as was sometimes done, and it happened that the child died meanwhile, the priests might be required to refund the money, as it had not become due until the child was thirty days old.

This being the case, persons who lived at any distance, and did not wish to prolong their stay in the metropolis by the ten days' interval, were content to go up in time for the purification, when both the ceremonies were gone through at once—the father first presenting the child, and the mother then standing forward for purification. The delay was further desirable, as the mother and child were by that time stronger for the journey, which was often from a considerable distance.

The reader will desire some information respecting these observances. First, then, of the presentation :

When the Lord destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians, and in distinguishing mercy spared the first-born of Israel from

the common doom, He decreed that the first-born of man and beast should be consecrated to Him. The beasts of lawful kind were to be offered in sacrifice, and the unlawful (such as asses) to be redeemed by the substitution of a lawful victim ; and the first-born of man were to be set apart for the service of the Lord. But when afterwards the whole tribe of Levi was appointed to such services, it pleased the Lord to direct that this circumstance should still be commemorated by the presentation of the first-born at the tabernacle, when he was to be redeemed from the service by a money payment of five shekels. This was a considerable sum for a poor person : and the theory was, that if the parents were too poor to redeem him, he became liable for the lower offices of the temple service. But the theory, we think, was never carried into practice, as there were generally individuals willing to make up the sum for a very poor person ; and, if not, the priests, although they could not excuse the payment, yet, of course, suffered the infant to remain with its mother, and the parents found means of raising the sum before the services of the child would be required.

The other ceremony was that of the purification.

In legal recognition of the fact of our being born in sin, a woman was accounted ceremonially unclean for forty days after the birth of a son, and eighty days after the birth of a daughter ; and from this condition, which involved some disabilities, she was delivered by appearing before the priest at the east gate of the temple, where, after making the usual offerings, she was slightly sprinkled with the blood by the officiating priest, and declared clean. The proper offering was a lamb ; but as this might have been heavy upon the poor, the law considerably provided that in such a case two turtle doves or two young pigeons should be substituted ; and, indeed, we are told that practically, where the poverty was too extreme to reach even to the inferior oblation, the tenth part of an ephah of meal might be accepted. The offering presented by Mary and Joseph—'two turtle doves, or two young pigeons,' it is not stated which—implies narrow circumstances indeed, but not that abject poverty which some suppose. In the case of such

oblations as theirs, one of the doves was used as a burnt-offering, and the other as a sin-offering.

It may be remarked, that the provisions of the Levitical law, in these respects, had no application to such a case as that of Jesus. 'So remarkable a birth might have precluded the necessity of Levitical purification. The ransom which had to be paid for other first-born sons, in view of their original obligation to the priesthood, could hardly be necessary in the case of an infant who was one day to occupy the summit of the theocracy. It would be natural to suppose that Mary must have hesitated, and laid her scruples before the priests for decision, before she could make up her mind to perform these ceremonies. But we cannot judge of such extraordinary events by common standards. Mary did not venture to speak freely in public of these wonderful things, or to anticipate the divine purpose in any way; she left it to God to educate the child which had been announced to her as the Messiah, so as to fit Him for his calling, and at the proper time to authenticate his mission publicly and conspicuously.'<sup>1</sup>

The writer whose words we have here cited, powerfully applies these circumstances to the refutation of the misbelieving authors who contend for the mythical character of our Lord's early history. A mythus generally strives to ennoble its subject, and to adapt the story to the idea. If, then, the gospel narrative were mythical, would it have invented, or even suffered to remain, a circumstance so foreign to the idea of the myth, and so little calculated to dignify it? A mythus would have introduced an angel, or at least a vision, to prevent Mary from submitting the child to a ceremony so unworthy of its dignity; or the priests would have received an intimation from heaven to bow before the infant, and to prevent its being thus reduced to the level of ordinary children. Nothing of this nature took place; but, simply and unostentatiously, the high dignity and destiny of the child were revealed to *two* faithful souls.

<sup>1</sup> NEANDER, *Life of Jesus*, p. 25.



**Thirtieth Week—Third Day.**

SIMEON AND ANNA.—LUKE II. 25-38.

THE 'two faithful souls,' who were privileged to recognise the Christ of God in the infant brought to the temple by Mary and Joseph, were two aged people named Simeon and Anna.

It has been sought to identify this Simeon with another person of the same name (a very common one among the Jews) who was alive at the time, namely, the Rabban Simeon, the son of Hillel, a famous doctor of the Pharisees, and father of the celebrated Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul sat, as a student of Jewish learning under its most accomplished master. This Simeon's father, Hillel, at this time still living, was president of the council or Sanhedrim, an office in which, at his decease, he was succeeded by his son. Of Simeon little is known but his name, position, and parentage; and the degree of obscurity to which he has been consigned, in comparison with his father and his son, has been thought to favour the probability that he had attained to more enlightened views respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom than generally prevailed, and, by consequence, that he was the Simeon here mentioned. An identification founded merely on a name so common as that of Simeon is, however, very precarious. Our Simeon is also evidently a very old man, on the borders of the grave, and therefore much older than Rabban Simeon could have been. Besides, the declaration of a man so noted and conspicuous, in a place so public, would have made a prodigious sensation, and must have come to the ears of Herod, whose jealousy would not have needed an awakening from the visit of the wise men.

That this Simeon was not the celebrated master of the schools, may also fairly be inferred from the silence of St. Luke, who, although writing primarily for Greek converts, would scarcely have omitted to state distinctly the testimony of so distinguished a man to the Messiahship of Jesus.

All we really know of Simeon is, that he was one of those

who 'waited for the consolation of Israel,' longing and praying for the coming of the Messiah's kingdom, and that he had received the divine assurance, that he should not taste of death without witnessing the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

The phrase employed, 'waiting for the consolation of Israel,' was one of well-known significance among the Jews, as expressing the coming of the Messiah; and was founded upon the terms in which Isaiah introduced his prediction of that coming: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' They used, it seems, even to swear by their hope of seeing the consolation of Israel. Many instances of this might be cited from the Talmud.<sup>1</sup>

Simeon, entering the temple at the time the divine child was brought in, cast his eyes upon Him, and the inspiring Spirit apprised him that this infant was the Hope of Israel; that in Him, the Lord whom he sought had suddenly come to his temple, as ancient prophets had foretold. Transported at this fulfilment of all his hopes, the holy man caught the child in his arms, and exclaimed, in a burst of inspired gratitude: 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.' By this exclamation one perceives that his scope of vision was carried far beyond the narrow Jewish point of view. He conceives, indeed, the kingdom of the Messiah as tending specially to glorify the Jewish nation; but he extends its blessings over the heathen also, and believes that 'the true Light' will enlighten them as well as the Jews. This is a view which had till now been intimated only by the announcing angels; and

<sup>1</sup>R. Judah ben Yabai said: So let me see the consolation (of Israel) if I have not put to death a false witness. Simeon ben Shetach said unto him: So let me see the consolation, if thou hast not shed innocent blood.

R. Eliezer ben Zadog said: So let me see the consolation, if I did not see her gleaned under the horses' heels.

R. Simeon ben Shetach said: So let me see the consolation, I saw one pursuing another with a drawn sword.

In the Targum also upon Jer. xxxi. 6, we find the phrase: Those who desire the years of consolation that are to come.

considering how jealous the Jews were in appropriating to themselves all the hopes and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, Simeon's testimony is a strong evidence of the depth of knowledge which had been imparted to him on this great subject, probably in the prayerful study of ancient prophecy.

When Simeon had uttered these words of thankfulness and joy, he turned to Mary, and exclaimed, 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' Here is a very important addition to what he had said previously. From this we learn, that according to his faith, while Israel would be eventually glorified in the Messiah, yet at first He would be to them a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, over which they would fall; but ultimately to be raised up again. If, as we suppose, these views were derived from the devout study of inspired Scripture, they are precisely the same as we ourselves obtain from the same study. Israel have fallen; but shall rise again: have fallen that they may rise.

Still more: Simeon did not conceive that all would yield to the Messiah and bow before Him, when once He girded on his conquering sword; but understood that 'He was to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself;' and was to triumph through suffering, sorrow, death. It is plain that his intimation of the great grief in store for the mother who stood before Him—that a sword should pierce through her own soul also, was founded on a clear conception, derived doubtless from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, of the sufferings that awaited her Divine Son, by which her maternal heart could not fail to be deeply wounded, especially when she saw his honoured head droop in death upon the cross.

From a consideration of these points in his famous testimony, it may be seen that Simeon's knowledge of the real nature of the Messiah's mission, character, and kingdom, though not more than might be derived through the enlightened study of prophetic Scripture, was far more distinct and accurate than

any that even the Lord's own apostles possessed, until after the tongues of fire rested upon their heads at the Feast of Pentecost.

The other pious soul to whom the destiny of the infant Jesus was revealed, was the aged Anna, who heard Simeon's words, shared in his anticipations, and joined in his song of thanksgiving. It is remarkable, that although, in this interesting transaction, Simeon is the foremost figure, and his words alone are recorded, yet more is stated personally of Anna than of him. We are told that she was 'a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser.' Why she is called a prophetess is not clear. It may be because she had been the wife of a prophet; it may be because she employed herself in celebrating the praises of God, which was sometimes called prophesying; or it may be that the spirit which had heretofore rested upon the Deborahs and Huldahs, was known to speak at this time by her. That she was of the tribe of Asher, is a further proof that the knowledge of their tribes and genealogies had been preserved among the Jews until the Messiah came; it also proves that members of the ten tribes returned from the East along with the captivity of Judah. This prophetess was venerable for her eminent piety preserved to extreme old age. Seven years she had lived with her husband after quitting her maiden state, and from his death she had remained in widowhood eighty-four years; so that, if she was married at twelve years and a half, which was among the Jews counted a marriageable age, she may have been upwards of a hundred and three years old at this time, and could not well have been less than a hundred. Although the territories of her tribe were at a great distance from Jerusalem, she, not content with merely repairing thither for worship at the great festivals—and perhaps because at her age such journeys were distressing to her—had fixed her residence in the holy city; and there 'she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.' This means, not that she was always in the temple—for it is stated that she had just come in—but that she was constant in her attendance at every act of

worship and sacred service, making her extreme age no excuse for neglect, but rather rejoicing in a privilege of which thousands younger and stronger than she would not avail themselves. It is well known that the temple services were not much frequented even by men, and by women still less, or not at all, except on the Sabbath days and at great solemnities,—a fact which imparts special emphasis to this declaration respecting Anna the prophetess.

### *Thirtieth Week—Fourth Day.*

THE STAR IN THE EAST.—MATTHEW II. 1, 2.

IN those days a circumstance occurred which excited a strong sensation at Jerusalem. There appeared from the far East certain learned and illustrious strangers, earnestly inquiring for the new-born 'King of the Jews;' declaring that, when they were in the East, they had 'seen his star,' and that they had come to render Him homage.

Already there are in this account matters which excite our inquiry, and demand our attention, before proceeding further. Who were these 'wise men?' What concern had they with the birth of a 'king of the Jews?' What was the nature of the star which they had seen in the East, and how came they to conclude that it had any connection with the birth about which they were making inquiry?

If we repair to Roman Catholic authorities, we shall, as usual, learn much more about these strangers than the Scripture teaches. They were from Arabia; their number was three; they were kings; their very names are known—Gaspar, Melchoir, and Balthasar; and, to crown all, their bodies repose in the odour of sanctity at Cologne, and they are popularly known as 'the three kings of [or at] Cologne.' What more can we desire to know? Not more, certainly; and we must be content to know much less. It is right to state, however, that the best Roman Catholic commentators admit the doubt-

fulness of all this. One of them<sup>1</sup> freely points out that these names are modern, and that other names as doubtful as these are to be found in some authors. Thus, we are told that in Greek they are called Magdalat, Galgalat, Saracin; and in Hebrew, Apellius, Amerus, Damascus; but these names are the manifest inventions of persons ignorant of both Greek and Hebrew. Others call them Ator, Sator, Paratoras, names forged at random, and unknown till the twelfth century. That they were kings, and that their number was three, was not expressly affirmed by any writer until the ninth century. Tertullian has indeed been often quoted as an authority; but the case as regards him is, that after citing the words of the Psalm,<sup>2</sup> 'The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts,' he adds, that the East ordinarily had magi for kings,—a statement which certainly was not true at the time of Christ's birth concerning any country whose history we possess, not even concerning Persia. In fact, the notion that the 'wise men' were kings, was at a comparatively late period inferred by interpretation from the text just cited, which has been presumed to be prophetically applicable to the event; and as Seba and Sheba were in Arabia, on this text is also founded the prevalent notion that the wise men came from that quarter. That their number was *three*, is a similar deduction from the text (Matt. ii. 11), in which the strangers are described as presenting 'gold, frankincense, and myrrh,' it being presumed that each of these three articles was offered by a different person. In such uncertain and precarious deductions often originate details which, in the lapse of time, assume the character of positive facts and affirmative traditions.

The word translated 'wise men' is in the original MAGI,—a word which is, however, not Greek, but a foreign oriental term, adopted by the evangelists, and other writers in Greek, as an appellative. This title of magi, or magians, originally belonged to the priests, who were also the learned men of the Persians, under that religious system which was described in the previous volume of this work. From this use of the term it

<sup>1</sup> CALMET, *Dissertation sur les Mages.*

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxii. 10.

gradually, in all the countries constituting the great Persian empire, and eventually much beyond what had been its limits, came to denote any man who applied himself to learned and scientific pursuits. This description anciently included, in all countries, much study of what was deemed occult knowledge, such as astronomy in its application to astrology, and what we call natural philosophy, the facts and results of which, though familiar to ourselves, formed a treasury of hidden knowledge to the 'wise men' of ancient times; in short, the name covered all that was true, all that was pretensive, and all that was false, in the philosophy of the ancient Orientals. Astronomy was, however, the favourite object of magian study; and the face of the heavens was so much examined, that any strange luminous body could hardly fail to attract attention. Such a body was observed by our sages at the time the Saviour was born; and it remains to ask, what it was; and then, how they were led to connect it with the birth of a 'king of the Jews.'

The notion that this luminous appearance was a star, or planetary body, then first called into existence and created for the occasion, originated when the system of the universe was but little understood, and the nature of the planetary bodies wholly misapprehended. God does not make waste of his almightiness, or call forth more power than is needed to produce the result his divine wisdom contemplates. This notion is not, therefore, now entertained. Still, and with all deference to better astronomers than we can pretend to be, it seems to us quite possible that, in the divine foreknowledge, it may have been so ordered, that the light from one of the heavenly bodies, and therefore that body itself, should at this particular time first become visible to spectators on the earth. Nothing is more familiar to students of astronomy than the great length of time it takes for a ray of light from the more distant heavenly bodies to reach the earth, and so long must it have been after the creation of any one of these remote bodies before it could be seen from the earth. We do not, however, suppose that this was the case, though it may solve some difficulties in the way of those who will persist in claiming a new star for the occasion.

The favourite notion on the Continent at present is that which originated with Kepler, and which has lately been revived and supported with great ingenuity and vigour. It was first set forth in this country by a writer in the *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, from whose article<sup>1</sup> the following particulars are gathered:—

The conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, which took place in 1604, presented such appearances as reminded the great astronomer of the star of the magi, and led him to hope that he had discovered the data on which the period of our Lord's birth might be determined by astronomical calculations. 'He made his calculations, and found that Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in the constellation of the Fishes (a fish is the astrological symbol of Judea) in the latter half of the year of Rome 747, and were joined by Mars in 748. Here, then, he fixed the first figure for the date of our era, and here he found the appearance in the heavens which induced the magi to undertake their journey, and conducted them successfully on their way. Others have taken up this view, freed it from astrological impurities, and shown its trustworthiness and applicability in the case under consideration. It appears that Jupiter and Saturn came together for the first time on May 20th, in the twentieth degree of the constellation of the Fishes. They then stood before sunrise in the eastern part of the heavens, and so were seen by the magi. Jupiter then passed by Saturn towards the north. About the middle of September they were, near midnight, both in opposition to the sun—Saturn in the thirteenth, Jupiter in the fifteenth degree,—being distant from each other about a degree and a half. They then drew nearer. On October 27th there was a second conjunction in the sixteenth degree; and on November 12th there took place a third conjunction in the fifteenth degree of the same constellation. In the two last conjunctions the interval between the planets amounted to no more than a degree; so that, to the unassisted eye, the rays of the one planet were absorbed in those of the other, and the two bodies would appear as one.

<sup>1</sup> STAR IN THE EAST.



The two planets went past each other three times, came very near together, and showed themselves all night long for months in conjunction with each other, as if they would never separate again. Their first union in the East awoke the attention of the magi, told them the expected time had come, and bade them set off without delay towards Judea (the Fish Land). When they reached Jerusalem the two planets were once more blended together. Then in the evening they stood in the southern part of the sky, pointing with their united rays to Bethlehem, where prophecy declared the Messiah was to be born. The magi followed the finger of heavenly light, and were brought to the child Jesus. The conclusion in regard to the time of the advent is, that our Lord was born in the latter part of the year of Rome 747, or six years before the common era.'

This is one ingenious and beautiful explanation. As to the connection of this appearance with the Messiah, we are told, as is indeed certain, that a conviction had long been spread through the East, that about the time of the commencement of our era, a great and victorious Prince, or the Messiah, was to be born. His birth was in consequence of Balaam's words (himself an eastern prophet) connected with the appearance of a star. Num. xxiv. 17. So far all is clear; and it is certain that such an expectation did exist, not only in the East, but in the West; and furthermore, that it was expected that this great personage would make his appearance in Judea. We may add, that the ancient nations regarded the appearance of stars, meteors, or luminous bodies as indicating the birth of high personages, of which many examples are recorded; and that from the text referred to, the Jews themselves entertained the expectation that a star would appear at the birth of the Messiah. But we are further informed, that calculations seem to have led the astronomical astrologers of the East to place the time of the advent of this King in the latter days of Herod, and the locality in the land of Judea; and accordingly, at the appointed time, the two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, were, as first explained, in conjunction, 'under such circumstances as to

appear a resplendent heavenly body, and to marshal their way from their own homes to Jerusalem.'

Now, although we are reluctant to object to so neat a theory, we cannot help thinking that it fails in making out any possible connection, apparent to the magians, between this conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn and the birth of Christ. We do not see that there could be any astronomical, or even astrological, basis for such a calculation as is supposed. They might calculate the conjunction of the planets; but there was no datum on which to connect that conjunction with the birth of the expected Messiah. We are also reluctant to assume that the Lord would even to this extent employ the instrumentality of the delusive and reprobated science of 'the star-gazers and monthly prognosticators,' and thereby give an implied sanction to its errors. These magi must also have been sufficient astronomers to understand the nature of this phenomenon; and they would scarcely have designated as 'a star' the two planets in this relation to each other, even though their rays were so commingled as to appear one heavenly body. The explanation does, indeed, very skilfully meet the difficulty of supposing a conjunction of planets to indicate a particular country, though we were not aware that Judea was under the sign Pisces, and was therefore astrologically known as 'the Fish Land;' still, how could the rays indicate a small town, or any town, as alleged? The evangelist says that the star went before them, and stood over the place where the young child was. Allowing every latitude to the use of popular language, it is simply impossible for a fixed star, under any circumstances, to have given this indication. If the planets in conjunction had appeared to the magi as resting over Bethlehem when they had crossed the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, it is certain that they would have appeared just as far still to the south of Bethlehem when the travellers approached that place.

This applies also to a comet which some suppose to have been the star in question; and, indeed, it applies equally to our own suggestion, that a star may then have first become visible.

We therefore remain shut up to the conclusions, that the star

of the magi was a luminous meteor of some kind or other, the motions of which were supernaturally directed ; and that it is called 'a star' either from its resemblance to one, or from its concentrated brightness. The wise men, who afterwards were divinely instructed as to their homeward way, may well have been in the same manner taught to know what this appearance signified ; and that, if they followed its leading, it would conduct them to Him who was 'the desire of all nations,' and whose appearance was then earnestly expected by both Jews and Gentiles. This expectation may have arisen from ancient traditions ; from intercourse with the Jews, who were then found in almost every important town ; and from a knowledge, more or less direct, of the prophecies of Isaiah. Both in the East and in the West, the Jews doubtless vaunted largely of their expectations in this respect, till the heathen, among whom they dwelt, became familiar with the idea ; and over all the vast region in which the Greek language was spoken or understood, the prophecies were directly accessible through the translation made in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Writers who lived before Christ indicate their knowledge of these prophecies ; and Virgil in particular has left a poem, which is little other than a paraphrase of Isaiah's great predictions of the Messiah's reign.

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This passage is encompassed by difficulties. No mode of interpretation can wholly remove them. On the one hand, we have the definite term 'star,' which can scarcely be explained as signifying a meteor, or miraculous luminary created or sent for a specific purpose. It seems strange that the accurate evangelist would apply the name 'star' to any such object. Then again, on the other hand, we have the simple matter of fact statement that the star 'went before them ;' and not only so, but that it went before them '*until it came and stood over where the child was.*' How could a star do so ? If this passage is to be taken in its ordinary and exactly literal sense, the object which the magi saw, and which guided them, could not have been an ordinary 'star.' It is evident, therefore, that one portion or other of the passage must be interpreted with a certain amount of latitude. Either that which is

called a 'star' was so only in appearance—it had the form and brightness of a star, though in reality a supernatural meteor. Or, if the star was, as modern astronomers affirm, the ordinary astronomical phenomenon of a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, then its going before them, and standing over the place where the child was, was only apparent. To their eyes it seemed to do this. As they journeyed from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, it appeared on the southern horizon, and consequently directly over the town of Bethlehem.

This latter is a pleasing mode of interpretation, and its scientific tone gives it favour among some critics. But the following remarks of an accomplished investigator set it aside completely, and force us back to the old and ordinary theory, that the star of the magi was a supernatural meteor, specially sent to indicate to them the advent of the Messiah, and to guide them to his presence. Mr. Pritchard states that he undertook the very formidable labour of calculating afresh an *ephemeris* of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, and of the sun, from May to December, B.C. 7. I give the result in his own words: "Supposing the magi did undertake the journey at the time in question, it seems impossible that the conjunction of December B.C. 7 can, on any reasonable grounds, be considered as fulfilling the conditions in St. Matthew ii. 9. The circumstances are as follow: On December 4th, the sun set at Jerusalem at 5 P.M. Supposing the magi to have then commenced their journey to Bethlehem, they would first see Jupiter and his dull and somewhat distant companion one and a half hour distant from the meridian, in a south-east direction, and decidedly to the east of Bethlehem. By the time they came to Rachel's tomb, the planets would be due south of them, on the meridian, and no longer over the hill of Bethlehem, for that village bears from Rachel's tomb S. 13° E. The road then takes a turn to the east, and ascends the hill near to its western extremity; the planets therefore would now be on their right hands, and a little *behind* them; the "star," therefore, ceased altogether to go "before them" as a guide. Arrived at the hill in the village, it became physically impossible for the star to stand over any house whatever close to them, seeing that it was now visible far away beyond the hill on the west, and far off in the heavens at an altitude of 57°. As they advanced, the star would of necessity recede, and under no circumstances could it be said to stand "over" any house, unless at the distance of miles from the place where they were. Thus the two heavenly bodies altogether fail to fulfil either of the

conditions implied in the words, "went before them," or "stood over." . . . Thus the beautiful phantasm of Kepler and Ideler, which has fascinated so many writers, vanishes before the more perfect daylight of investigation.'<sup>1</sup>

### *Thirtieth Week—Fifth Day.*

VISIT OF THE MAGI.—MATTHEW II. 3-12.

How happened it that the eastern magi, having the guidance of the star, went to seek the new-born King in Jerusalem, where He was not? It may be that the star had only appeared to them in the East, as a sign, which *they* of all men could understand, that the expected Messiah was at length born. Sharing the universal expectation that He was to appear about this time, that He was to appear in Judea, and that a star was to give the sign of the event, it may be urged that they needed no star to guide them to the land in which they had already learned He was to be looked for. Or if then, as after, they received a divine intimation, they could hardly have failed to know from it in what land the illustrious Child was to be sought; and if, in either way, they knew that Judea was that land, assuredly they knew the way thither without a star. The case was altered when they had entered Judea; for how then were they, without a sign, to discover Him who lay obscurely hidden among the thousands of Israel?

It has, however, been conjectured by some, that the star did conduct them to Judea, and that then, supposing they no longer needed its guidance, they turned aside to Jerusalem, and so lost sight of it till they were again in the right way. But it seems to be forgotten that Jerusalem was in the right way to Bethlehem, if, as we suppose, they had come across the river Jordan. Under any hypothesis, it was perfectly natural that they should proceed to, or pause at, the metropolitan city. Where else should they expect to find or to hear of the illus-

<sup>1</sup> SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible*, s. v. STAR.

trious new-born? Surely there were high rejoicings in all her palaces! Surely the glorious news was ringing through all her streets and market-places, and was celebrated in her renowned temple! They reasonably supposed that any one they accosted would be able most readily to answer their simple question, 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?' and they could not but be amazed and perplexed at the astonishment the question excited in those to whom it was addressed. Some of the people, however, who heard their question, thought it wisest to conduct them to the palace, as it seemed to be a matter of state, and might refer to something which had taken place there, though it had not yet been made known to the public. The tyrant who sat upon the throne 'was troubled' at the errand of the distinguished strangers. He knew the expectation of the Jews; and, so far as he shared it, a man of his temper could not but regard with jealousy and dismay the birth of an heir of David's house, destined to re-establish his father's throne, to conquer and to reign—circumstances which could not co-exist with the preservation in his family of that power which had been most bloodily won and unworthily exercised. Of the spiritual character of the Messiah's reign, neither he nor his subjects generally, much less the Gentiles, had any conception: it was as a temporal king that he beheld Him; and hence a rival, to be put down and destroyed. Why Herod was troubled is thus easily understood; but it is said all Jerusalem were also troubled. How was that? The people had nothing to fear, but much to hope. The Herodian family was not popular with them, and there were perhaps not fifty men in Israel who would have lifted a finger to save it from ruin. Was it, then, that because of their sins they dreaded a reign of righteousness, or that they feared this inquiry might lead to some new and frightful excess on the part of the king, whose suspicious and remorseless character was but too well known to them? We rest in the latter conclusion.

Still, how comes it to pass that the tidings of what had happened should be so new and surprising at Jerusalem, after the publication of the fact to and by the shepherds, and after

the open declarations of Simeon and Anna in the temple itself? Something of it must have been heard; but as it seemed to refer to poor and obscure persons, it was little regarded. Now, however, when distinguished foreigners came from afar, in some state, and furnished with valuable presents, to make inquiries, the case is altered; and that which was before but little heeded, becomes at once a matter of serious consequence.

Herod at once saw that 'the King of the Jews,' for whom the magi inquired, could be no other than the Messiah: his first step was therefore to summon the priests and scribes, that he might obtain their authoritative decision as to the place where the Messiah was to be born. They at once named Bethlehem, quoting Micah v. 2 as the decisive text on the question. And here it may be noted that the body which gave this very satisfactory information respecting the place from which the Messiah was to come, was the same body which, in a later day, declared of Jesus: 'We know this man whence he is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.' John vii. 27.

The information he had obtained was made known by Herod to the magians; but he suffered them not to depart until, in a private audience, he had enjoined them to return to Jerusalem, to bring him word respecting the illustrious infant, that he also, as he pretended, might render Him homage, and lay his honours at the feet of the true heir of David's royal house.

As the sages approached Bethlehem, they beheld again, with gladness, the star of which so much has been said already, and which, by hovering over the house in which the humble pair had found refuge with the child, spared them all trouble of inquiry, of search, or of circumstantial identification. This, as we have already urged, shows that the star must have been some meteor low in the atmosphere, and not one of the fixed stars. Nor was this further appearance of the meteor needless: for the shepherds, having withdrawn to the pastures, there was probably none among those whom the sages met in the streets of Bethlehem, who could tell them anything of persons so

obscure, or who, if they knew them, would recognise the child under such a designation as that which the strangers gave. And, besides this, the indication given by the star, by precluding the need of inquiry through the place, materially contributed to the safety of the child, imperilled as it now was by the fears and jealousy of the reigning tyrant.

Through the representation which painters have given of this scene, the impression has grown up, that the sages found the family still in the stable, and the babe lying in the manger. Indeed, the shepherds are often introduced into the scene, and even a cow or two, and perhaps a donkey, to complete the effect. But painters are bad interpreters of Scripture scenes, caring more for the picturesque than for the true, and being in general but too ready to sacrifice the latter to the former. In this case the opportunity of contrasting the magnificence of the 'three kings' in 'barbaric pearl and gold,' with the homeliness of the stable and the roughness of the shepherds, has not often been resisted, though it must be obvious that the sages made a journey—probably a long one—to the spot, subsequent to the time at which the shepherds had seen the infant Saviour. Indeed, we have all along assumed that it took place more than a month after—that is, after Joseph and Mary had returned from presenting the child in the temple, and performing the rites of purification. In this interval, the crowds who were at Bethlehem at the time of the Nativity must have taken their departure, leaving the place comparatively empty; and it was no longer needful to remain in the stable, or difficult to obtain such lodging as they desired. They, therefore, probably removed from the stable to the khan itself, or perhaps to some humble dwelling in the town that might happen to be vacant.

For the obscure circumstances in which they found the infant they had come so far to honour, the strangers must in some measure have been prepared by what had happened to them at Jerusalem; and being, on the best evidence, assured that they had indeed found Him whom they sought, and to whose birth the very heavens had borne witness, they bowed to the decrees of providence—though so mysterious



and so contrary to what, on natural calculation, they had expected—and bent low in homage before the holy child. It is said, in the authorized version, that they ‘fell down and worshipped Him.’ The term rendered ‘worship,’ indicates the posture of prostration which was usual to the people of the East, both in paying adoration to the Deity, and in manifesting reverence for their kings; and, in like manner, our English word ‘worship’ bore the twofold signification of respect and of adoration at the time our translation was made. So, in a contemporary publication,<sup>1</sup> there are four significations given to the word, and the first is, ‘Civill reverence due unto men for their authoritie and gifts. Matt. ix. 18: “There came a certain ruler and worshipped Him.” This is civill reverence.’ This sense of the word is now obsolete, though a relict of it is preserved from those times in the formal designation of certain magistrates and other functionaries, as ‘Right worshipful,’ and ‘Worshipful;’ and in addressing them as ‘Your worship.’ Seeing that his divine character formed no part of the popular expectation of the Messiah then entertained by either Jews or Gentiles, there seems no reason to suppose that the worship rendered by the magians was any other than the highest civil homage. Yet we know not to what extent they may have been *specialy* enlightened in this matter; and it is certain that the Christians, from a very early date, deduced, either from this adoration, or from the gifts offered, or from both, an argument that Christ is God.<sup>2</sup>

The universal usage of the East, not to approach the presence of a superior, particularly a sovereign, without some valuable gift, found expression in the costly but portable offerings of gold, myrrh, and frankincense which these eastern sages presented to the infant Messiah. The nature of these

<sup>1</sup> *A Christian Dictionary,—opening the Signification of the chief Words dispersed generally through Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, tending to increase Christian Knowledge.* By THOMAS WILSON, Minister of the Word at St. George’s, in Canterbury. London: printed by William Jaggard, dwelling in Barbican. First edition, 1611; third, 1622.

<sup>2</sup> So Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, etc.

articles has been supposed to supply an additional argument for the conclusion that they came from Arabia, these being usually regarded as the produce of that country. But, in fact, gold, myrrh, and frankincense were too much diffused through the East, and, from their value, were too generally used as presents to superiors, to indicate with any certainty the quarter from which the magi came; and thus the other grounds are left open on which we conclude that they came, not from Arabia, but from the regions beyond the Euphrates.

### **Thirtieth Week—Sixth Day.**

A CHRONOLOGICAL QUESTION.—MATT. II. 13; LUKE II. 39.

IT will be observed that the evangelist Luke, after recording the circumstances which attended the presentation of the Lord in the temple, adds, 'and when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.' He says nothing about the visit of the magi to Bethlehem and its consequences, with the flight to, and sojourn in, Egypt. On the other hand, Matthew relates nothing of the circumstances which led Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (though he states that Jesus was born there), nor of the presentation in the temple; and seems to send them at once from Bethlehem to Egypt soon after the visit of the magi.

This has raised the question—involving one of the greatest difficulties in harmonizing the gospel narratives—in what order we are to place the events which, respectively, one of these two evangelists omits, and the other relates; or, in other words, whether the presentation in the temple was *before* or *after* the visit of the magi. We, as the result of much and careful inquiry, have related the former event as anterior to the latter; and we feel inclined to lay the arguments on *both* sides before the reader, as a specimen of the sort of investigations which lie in the way of a person who undertakes to

reduce into one, four original narratives of the same history, or to bring into chronological order the events which they severally relate. Questions of this nature are rather numerous, and sometimes important; and respecting all of them, a writer dealing thus with the history must make up his mind before he can hazard a simple statement, which in itself affords no trace or memorial of the researches through which alone it could be reached.

That the visit of the magi was prior to the presentation at the temple, has been by many thought to be rendered probable by the fact, that the public declaration of Simeon in the temple on that occasion, and the concurrence and reports of a woman so well known as Anna, do not accord with the surprise felt by Herod at the inquiries of the strangers, and the general ignorance that seems to have prevailed on the subject. It is further remarked, that no adequate reason appears why the family should have returned to Bethlehem, where the magi found them, *after* the presentation in the temple; but it would seem more reasonable that, as the words employed by Luke appear to intimate, they should return to their home at Nazareth when all that the law required had been performed.

To the first of these reasons, for the priority of the visit of the magi, it may be answered, that we do not at all know the real degree of publicity involved in the declarations of Simeon and Anna, or that the inquiries of the magi would at the instant of time come to the knowledge of the persons cognizant of the previous circumstances. And if known to many, Herod is the last person likely to have heard of them; for there must have been a general reluctance to disclose to one, whose wrath was but too well known to be cruel as the grave, any circumstances which might tend to awaken his jealousy or suspicion. The chief priests and scribes who were summoned to council were only asked where Christ should be born, and they answered rightly, at Bethlehem. This was all they were asked, and all they needed to answer; and if, among them, there were some acquainted with what had taken place at the presentation, they would have been little likely to volunteer the

information. Indeed, we apprehend that if the whole city had known these circumstances, there would have been a general feeling to keep them from the knowledge of Herod, and to guard from him the life of the infant Messiah. The dominion of the Herodian family was hateful to the people, who longed for the time when it should be brought to a close, as was expected, by the Messiah. There would have been, we may suppose, every disposition to regard the new-born child as the long-hoped-for son of David. He was of David's line; He was born at Bethlehem; and his birth was not wanting in signal manifestations. These facts, some of them obscured by the time our Lord commenced his public career, might *then* have been easily ascertained. At that time, therefore, there could have been none of that prepossession against his claim which existed thirty years later, when these circumstances of his early history had gone out of knowledge, and when a prejudice had been excited by his declaring, to the utter frustration of the popular views and objects, that his kingdom was not of this world.

As to the return to Bethlehem, we must remember that it was very near to Jerusalem—not above six miles off. It is, therefore, quite probable that Joseph and Mary would first go up some morning to the temple, and then return to Bethlehem to settle their little affairs before proceeding home finally to the distant Nazareth. Or, as it occurs to us, one of the three annual festivals may have been near at hand; and, in that case, they would naturally have wished to remain in the neighbourhood, in order to attend it before returning to their home. It is, however, quite possible that Joseph had, during his protracted stay in his ancestral town, seen reasons for concluding to make it the place of his future residence. Remembering that Christ was to come from Bethlehem, he might naturally desire to render this fact evident concerning Jesus, by removing thither; and the policy of such an arrangement is demonstrated by the reproach which Jesus afterwards incurred, as having apparently come, not from Bethlehem, but from Nazareth in Galilee, 'out of which ariseth no prophet.'

As a comparatively poor man, he must necessarily have sought employment at his trade during his first stay at Bethlehem ; and this may have been so much better than he had found at Nazareth, as to encourage his purpose of remaining in the city of his fathers' sepulchres. This is not mere conjecture ; for we find that, when Joseph returned with his family from Egypt, it was his intention to remain in Judea, doubtless at Bethlehem ; and it was only the information he received as to the state of affairs in that dominion, which induced him to proceed into Galilee, to his former place of residence at Nazareth.

The strongest argument for the priority of the presentation, seems to be found in the offering presented on that occasion, which was that prescribed for poor persons ; and this would not have been necessary had they then been in possession of the valuable gifts of 'the wise men from the East.' Surely they could then have afforded a lamb for an offering, and would have rejoiced to have this in their power.

Again : is it likely that, after the jealousy of Herod had been awakened, and after the magi had been directed to return home by another way, Joseph and Mary would have been allowed, by going to Jerusalem at that particular time, to run into the very jaws of danger, especially considering that the declarations of Simeon and Anna, which would then have acquired immense importance, would have at once pointed the child out to those who sought his life ?

We are, besides, expressly told that, after the visit of the magi, the parents were supernaturally directed to withdraw into Egypt, for the very purpose of evading the danger to which a visit to Jerusalem would at that time have exposed them.

What then becomes of Luke's assertion, that they went to Nazareth after having done, respecting the infant, all that the law required ? Well, and so they did ; but not until after other circumstances had taken place, which Luke does not himself record, but which Matthew does. In all concise historians, a connection is thus apparently given, by the omission of intervening particulars, to events that were really distant. Other

instances of this occur in the Gospels. Thus, in Luke xxi. 7-37, Jesus' prophecy seems immediately connected with the observations in verses 5, 6; and yet that there was some intervening time, and that the scene was not the temple, but the Mount of Olives, which commanded a full view of the temple, is apparent from Matt. xxiv. 3, Mark xiii. 3. So likewise in Luke xxiv. 50, the ascension of Christ seems connected with his appearance to the apostles on the first day of the resurrection; and yet the same evangelist tells us in Acts i. 3, that forty days intervened. Again: the journey into Galilee, mentioned in Matt. iv. 12, Mark i. 14, Luke iv. 14, seems to have immediately followed the temptation; and yet St. John acquaints us with many intermediate facts—such as the testimony of John the Baptist, the conversion of Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael, a journey into Galilee, a miracle at Cana, attendance at the Passover, and baptizing in Judea. There is also the remarkable instance in Acts ix. 19-26, where Paul's journey into Arabia, mentioned by himself in Gal. i. 17, is certainly passed over. It is obvious that, after so many clear instances—and there are more of the same kind,—no argument for the priority of the visit of the magi can be drawn from the statement of Luke respecting the return to Nazareth after the due performance of the legal ceremonials.

### *Thirtieth Week—Seventh Day.*

THE MASSACRE AT BETHLEHEM.—MATTHEW II. 16-18.

WHEN Herod desired the eastern sages to return to Jerusalem, and bring him word where they had found the new-born 'King of the Jews,' there can be no doubt that it was his secret purpose to destroy the child whom they might indicate. But when this secret purpose was prevented by their departure 'another way,' there was good cause for him to understand that an all-seeing and almighty providence resisted his design. The strangers could not by any natural means—and all the less as

they *were* strangers—have arrived at any suspicion of his intentions; and apart from such, they must have had every wish to meet the desire of the king of the land, whose declared purpose was to render honour to the Messianic infant. Kings are not used to ask for civilities in vain; and that these polite foreigners had paid no heed to his desire, afforded strong ground for concluding that they had been divinely warned against compromising the child's safety, or that they had by some means been permitted to gain possession of the secret hid in Herod's heart. This should have deterred him from his vain purpose of 'dissolving the golden chain of predestination,' by frustrating what he believed to be the purpose of God. 'Herod believed the divine oracles, foretelling that a king should be born in Bethlehem; and yet his ambition made him so stupid that he attempted to cancel the decree of Heaven. For if he did not believe the prophecies, why was he troubled? If he did believe them, how could he possibly hinder the event which God himself had foretold should certainly come to pass?'<sup>1</sup>

But since now his arrow could not be aimed definitely at the one infant in Bethlehem whose life he sought, the reckless tyrant, who was not accustomed to allow any considerations of human pity to stand for a moment in the way of his objects, determined to destroy all the infants there, at one fell swoop, that the single life he sought might perish in the massacre. This atrocious design was executed by the persons—soldiers probably—whom he sent with orders to kill all the children under two years old to be found in Bethlehem and its vicinity. 'This execution was sad, cruel, and universal. No abatements were made for the dire shrieking of the mothers; no tender-hearted soldier was employed; no hard-hearted person was softened by the weeping eyes and pity-begging looks of those mothers, that wondered how it was possible that any person should hurt their pretty sucklings; no connivances there, no protections, or friendships, or considerations, or indulgences.'<sup>2</sup> Painters and poets have laboured to depict the horrors of the

<sup>1</sup> JEREMY TAYLOR.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

scene; but nothing brings the results more vividly before the mind than the simple quotation from Jeremiah which the evangelist applies to the event. 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'

Exceptions have been taken to the account given of this transaction. Some of them are founded on misconceptions as to its nature, as if it amounted to the massacre of hundreds, or even thousands, of children. Indeed, 'the murder of the innocents' affords one remarkable example of the reaction of legendary extravagance upon the plain truth of the evangelical narrative. The Greek Church canonized them as 14,000 innocents;<sup>1</sup> and another notion, founded upon a misconception of Rev. xiv. 3, 4, swelled the number to 144,000. This gross error has not escaped the notice of the various acute adversaries of Christianity, who, by impeaching the extravagant tale, sought to bring the gospel narrative into discredit. In truth, however, Bethlehem was at that time, as it has indeed always been, merely a village, in which the number of infants must have been very small; and it would be extravagant to suppose that more than 25 children perished on this occasion, while it is quite possible that they may have been somewhat fewer.

It has also been urged, that not even Herod was likely to commit such an atrocity as this. It is easy, however, to show not only that it was likely he should do so, but that this act of blind and senseless fury, worthy of an insane tyrant, is a trait perfectly and signally in unison with what we know of his character. Neander has stated this with great force and effect. 'It was that Herod whose crimes, committed in violation of every natural feeling, ever urged him on to new deeds of cruelty; whose path to the throne, and whose throne itself, were stained with human blood; whose vengeance against con-

<sup>1</sup> They are also canonized in the Roman Church, which assigns a commemorative festival to them on December 28th. They are canonized as martyrs, 'because they lost their lives in the cause of Jesus Christ.'—*Les Vies des Saints*, ii. 492. Paris, 1734.



spirators, not satisfied with their own destruction, demanded that of their whole families ; whose rage was hot, up to the very hour of his death, against his nearest kindred ; whose wife Mariamne, and three sons, Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater, fell victims to his suspicions—the last just before his death ; who, in a word, certainly deserved that the Emperor Augustus should have said of him—*Herodis mallem porcus esse, quam filius.*<sup>1</sup> It was that Herod who, at the close of a blood-stained life of seventy years, goaded by the furies of an evil conscience, racked by a painful and incurable disease, waiting for death, but desiring life, raging against God and man, and maddened by the thought that the Jews, instead of bewailing his death, would rejoice over it as the greatest of blessings, commanded the worthies of the nation to be assembled in the circus, and issued a secret order, that, after his death, they should be slain together, so that *their* kindred at least might have cause to weep at his death. Can we deem the sacrificing a few children to his rage and blind suspicion too atrocious for such a monster ?'

These considerations meet all that can be urged as to the improbability of the transaction. But it has still been remarked as a strange circumstance, that this signal enormity is not mentioned by any contemporary writer. This does not amount to much ; for the only writer who might be expected to mention it is Josephus, and very satisfactory reasons can be given for *his* silence. This historian, indeed, reports many great public atrocities of Herod, but he does not catalogue his crimes ; he merely records them as involved in the course of his narrative, and the sequence of events. The massacre at Bethlehem was

<sup>1</sup> 'It is better to be Herod's hog than his son :'—'Because,' says Jeremy Taylor, 'the custom of the nation did secure a hog from Herod's knife, but no religion could secure his child.' It is curious that, by an anachronism of Macrobius (a writer of the fourth century), these words are applied to the massacre at Bethlehem ; and it is, accordingly, stated on this authority by Jeremy Taylor, and many others, that Herod's own son Antipater, being at nurse in Bethlehem, was slain in the massacre. But Antipater, who was indeed slain about this time, so far from being a child, complains of his grey hairs.—JOSEPHUS, *War*, i. 33.

much of an isolated act, not involved in the chain of historical events, and it could not be mentioned without explanatory particulars which he would wish to avoid. It would, therefore, be easily passed over; and there were reasons for passing it over—just as some of the evangelists themselves sometimes omit incidents that others record. It might, besides, not seem to Josephus a matter of much importance in comparison with the great public atrocities which he records in relating Herod's career; and as happening at an obscure place, and unattended with apparent consequences, he would consider it needless to introduce it into his history.

Perhaps he did not know it. He was not a contemporary, and could not know everything; and the event may have been one of which no public record existed. The orders of Herod, it is probable, were secretly given, and were executed as quietly as the nature of the case allowed. It was important in Christian history, and is therefore recorded by Matthew; but was not seemingly important in Jewish history, and is therefore not recorded by Josephus.

Besides, who is Josephus, that so much stress should be laid upon his silence? Inspiration apart, is he entitled to more credit as a historian than Matthew is? We should believe Matthew even if he contradicted Josephus, and much more when he states what Josephus not only does not deny, but has rendered probable by the information he gives us concerning the character of the tyrant, to whom this black and bloody deed is ascribed in the evangelical narrative.

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There is a difficulty in Matthew ii. 16-18, which Dr. Kitto has overlooked, and which may perhaps perplex some thoughtful readers. It is said regarding the massacre of the infants: 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.' The Rama here mentioned is doubtless the Ramah of Benjamin, one of the chief cities of that tribe. The difficulties may be stated in the form of two questions: 1. Why is Rachel, *the mother of Benjamin*, represented

as weeping for *her children*, seeing that Bethlehem was in the tribe of Judah? The answer is: Rachel died and was buried near Bethlehem (Gen. xxxv. 19), the border of the tribe of Benjamin reached to her sepulchre (1 Sam. x. 2); not only were the children of Bethlehem slain in Herod's massacre, but also 'those in *all the coast thereof*,' thus including that section of Benjamin around Rachel's sepulchre. The spirit of the departed Rachel is then represented as rising from the tomb and weeping over her slaughtered children. 2. But why was the voice of lamentation heard in Ramah, nearly ten miles distant? The answer is now easy. So deep was the impression made by the cruel massacre, that the cry of distress went through the whole land of Benjamin, reaching even to Ramah on its northern border, and the ancient capital of the tribe.



## Thirty-first Week—First Day.

GOD'S RETRIBUTIONS.—MATTHEW II. 8.

THERE are many points profitably observable in the circumstances which have just passed under our notice.

The pretence of a kind of religious zeal on the part of Herod, to honour One whom God had honoured, while there was nothing but hatred and destruction in his heart, forcibly arrests attention. Misapprehending the character and functions of the Messiah, as he and most others did, it is not to be supposed that the 'worship' he affected to be ready to offer was religious homage. It had, however, a professedly religious foundation, seeing that it was only because the Messiah had been appointed in the predeterminate counsels of God, and had been the subject of great and glorious prophecies, that the king proposed to pay Him this attention. It is thus that wicked men often cloak their most atrocious designs under the pretence of zeal for religion and for the honour of God. And, indeed, some of the most horrible deeds and designs which history has recorded, have had either the reality of a mistaken zeal for a false religion, or the pretence of zeal for a true religion. And it is observable, that, whether the zeal be true or assumed for the occasion, the concomitants of treachery—of luring the innocent to their ruin, and of surprising the unwary to their destruction—are as apparent as in the plot of Herod against the life of the new-born Messiah, and are as remorseless and sanguinary as the massacre in which that plot resulted. Who can help thinking of the St. Bartholomew massacre, of the Gunpowder Plot, of the persecutions of the Waldenses, and other dark doings of the like nature, which had the interests of religion for their motive or their pretence? And let us not think that the Herodian spirit in which such

deeds originated, is to be counted among the darkneses of a past age, and finds no response in our own. It is far otherwise. That spirit still lives; and, although it reigns not, yet it is sleepless, and watches but for occasion to rush forth and rend God's flock as of old; and even now, so far is it, as some fondly believe, from hanging its head in shame and grief at these old dishonours, it lifts its head on high, and vaunts of them as things to glory in, and to uphold for imitation. In proof of this, we have but to remember the fact that the Council of Lateran is still owned as an authority in the Romish Church;—that council which orders, in its third canon, that such as are condemned by the church for heresy, 'are to be delivered over to the secular powers or their officers, to receive due punishment;' and appoints, that should the temporal lord, to whom they are thus delivered, refuse to execute due punishment, 'the fact shall be signified to the supreme pontiff, who will declare his vassals released from their allegiance from that time, and will bestow his territory on Catholics.' In harmony with this atrocious canon, is the encyclical bull of Gregory XVI., issued in 1832, which denounces 'liberty of conscience,' as 'that execrable and detestable error.' Echoing the thunder of the Vatican, the recently Romanized party in England declare, through their periodical the *Rambler*, that religious liberty is 'an abominable delusion,' and that 'Catholicism is the most intolerant of creeds,'—explaining, 'It is intolerance itself, for it is the truth itself.' But *L'Univers*, the organ of the priest party in France, in an article published so lately as 1852, makes the avowal of persecuting principles still more audaciously, in the following terms: 'A heretic examined and convicted by the church, used to be delivered over to the secular power, and punished with death. Nothing has ever appeared to us more natural or more necessary. More than 100,000 persons perished in consequence of the heresy of Wicklyffe; a still greater number by that of John Huss; it would not be possible to calculate the bloodshed caused by the heresy of Luther; and it is not yet over. After three centuries, we are on the eve of a recommencement. The prompt re-

pression of the disciples of Luther, and a crusade against Protestantism, would have spared Europe three centuries of discord and of catastrophes, in which France and civilisation may perish. It was under the influence of such reflections, that I wrote the phrase which has so excited the virtuous indignation of the Red Journals. Here it is: For my part, I avow frankly my regret is not only that they did not sooner burn John Huss, but that they did not equally burn Luther: and I regret further, that there had not been at the time, some prince sufficiently pious and politic to have made a crusade against the Protestants. . . .

(Signed) LOUIS VENILLOT.'

There is, however, One who views these things differently, and takes a different account of the Herods of the world and their deeds; and who seldom fails, even in this life, to make manifest, by signal retributions, his judgment of signal wickedness and wrong-doing. Men, under the influence of their interests, their passions, and their prejudices, may, and often do, call evil good, and good evil. But there is only one judgment with that God, who views all that men do or think in the nakedness of their motives and their aims; and those who narrowly observe the final results of great acts of atrocity, or of an atrocious character or course of conduct, especially where religious zeal has been the pretence or motive, cannot fail to discern the marks of his indignation burnt deep into them. And the reason, with regard to the latter class of crimes, is plain—because his great name is dishonoured by the pretence of zeal for his glory as a cover for heinous deeds; and it becomes Him, for his honour, to disavow all complicity with those who dare to smite with the fist of wickedness in his name. How God set that mark upon the career of Herod, and especially on this part of it, in his death, we shall soon have occasion to show; and it cannot fail to be noticed, that the hero of the Bartholomew massacre went howling to his grave under the tortures and dishonours of a like death—a death which will appear, in many remarkable instances, to have been

much used by the Lord for the punishment of the sanguinary and blasphemous tyrants of the earth ; of those who, by afflicting his people on account of their religion, by arrogating divine honours to themselves, or by using his name as a cloak for deeds of blood, have marked themselves out for such signal retributions as might let the world know, that verily there is ‘ a God that judgeth in the earth’—*in the earth*, for all judgment is not left for the world to come. Charles ix. was consumed by a slow malignant fever, and the disease from day to day manifested new and unknown symptoms of pain and horror, till at length, in his last agonies, his blood was brought into such a state that it exuded freely from all the pores of his skin, rendering him an object most awful to look upon. It is said that a new star was seen soon after the massacre ; and whatever be thought of the nature of the fact, it was certainly a matter of contemporary belief ; for the speculations excited as to the purport of the omen—speculations various according to the humours of the times—still remain. Beza boldly asserted, that it portended the speedy death of the ‘ bloody Herod’ by whom that massacre had been ordered, and was freely censured for that opinion ; but when it was soon after verified by the extraordinary manner in which the king was smitten down in the vigour and prime of life, men changed their minds, and said that Beza was a prophet.

It is well also to observe, from this procedure of Herod, that all wickedness is useless. No permanent good, no solid advantage, was ever secured but by good and righteous means. All the trouble, all the crime, which Herod chose to incur, and for which he brought upon himself most grievous retributions in mind, body, and estate, were utterly abortive with regard to the object he had in view. And they were abortive doubly. Not only was his object frustrated by the eventual escape of the child at whose life his shaft was directed ; but had he indeed, instead of pursuing that life, gone and rendered to the divine child the homage he professed to be ready to offer, this would in no wise have endangered those temporal interests of his own which engaged all his solicitude. ‘ The child Jesus

was indeed born a king. But it was a king of all the world, not confined within the limits of a province, like the weaker beauties of a torch, to shine in one room, but, like the sun, his empire was over all the world ; and if Herod would have become but his tributary, and paid Him the acknowledgments of his Lord, he would have had better conditions than under Cæsar, and yet have been as absolute in his own Jewry as he was before. His kingdom was not of this world ; and He that gives heavenly kingdoms to all his servants would not have stooped to pick up Herod's petty coronet ; but as it is a very vanity which ambition seeks, so it is a shadow that disturbs and discomposes all its motions and apprehensions.'<sup>1</sup>

Christ came to die, and not to reign, or but to reign by dying. Herod's wrath did, therefore, but subserve the *real* purposes of God, which could not have been advanced by the patronage or homage of a Herod, or of any other king.

### Thirty-first Week—Second Day.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.—MATTHEW II. 13, 14.

HEROD probably rested in the notion that his object had been accomplished, and that the dreaded child had perished among the infants slain at Bethlehem. But it was not for his breath to quench the orb of day, or for any decree or act of his to frustrate the purposes and acts of God. Joseph had been timeously warned in a dream to take the young child and his mother, and withdraw with them to Egypt ; and they were either there, or on their way thither, at the time when the cries of mothers, rest of their little ones, rang piteously through the narrow streets of Bethlehem. Not this sword, but another as sharp, was the one destined, at a later day, to ' pierce through the soul' of the mother of Jesus.

The evangelists furnish none of the incidents of this journey. This silence of authentic history has been actively supplied by

<sup>1</sup> JEREMY TAYLOR, *Great Exemplar*, p. 105.



legends and traditions which are, in a certain point of view, interesting, or rather curious, as showing what kind of narratives of our Lord's life we should have had, in exchange for the noble simplicity of the Gospels, if men had been left to their own devices under the influence of the exaggerations of the oriental and the legendary spirit. If the narrative of our Lord's life and death had not been furnished by contemporary historians, but had been produced a generation or two later, and if the then writers had been left to themselves, we certainly should not have had accounts so impregnable to all the assaults of adverse criticism as the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We shall occasionally show this by citing some of the legendary anecdotes, which, of course, are most abundant where the Scripture is silent, as the legendary spirit could not so well work upon the facts recorded by the evangelists, as it could supply information which they might be supposed to have omitted, or add to the existing narratives details which they might be conceived to have passed over.

The painters, who are great conservators of traditions, have made us familiar with the idea, that the journey was performed by the aid of an ass, on which the mother and child rode, while Joseph trudged on beside, before, or behind it. This is not unlikely, as it is usual for a woman to ride upon an ass, while a man drives it along. The ass is always *driven* from behind, not *led* by a halter, and therefore the *leading* in the pictured 'flight into Egypt' is not true to nature. An ass, or even a mule, might easily have been purchased for the journey with the gifts of the magi; and the probability is, that they travelled, not alone, but in company with others journeying in the same direction, whom they may have joined on the road, if they did not start with them. Such journeys are scarcely ever performed but in companies; and as the intercourse between Egypt and Palestine was in that age very active, companies of travellers were continually passing in one direction or the other.

The *local* traditions are the most curious, because, being connected with places, they retain a stronger hold than any

other. The only traditions of this sort that we know have been matters of firm belief among Latin and Greek Christians, which has not been the case with the merely written traditions as embodied in apocryphal gospels and the like accounts.

One of these, however, concerns rather the journeys between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, than the flight into Egypt. About midway on this road stood formerly an old terebinth tree, which travellers, who saw it standing three hundred years ago and upwards, declare to have been the noblest and loftiest tree of the kind they ever beheld.<sup>1</sup> A tree like this, in such a place, could not fail to have some tradition connected with it. In-



deed, we should not have been surprised had we been told that David rested under its shade, with his bread-and-cheese-laden ass, on his way to the camp of Saul. All that was affirmed, however, is, that beneath the spreading branches of this very tree, the virgin mother and her divine child rested, on the way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem ; and in this belief the tree

<sup>1</sup> So Rauwolff, who saw it in 1575, and is, we think, the last traveller who saw it actually growing.—RAY'S *Collection of Travels*, i. 374. London, 1693.

was highly revered by pilgrims for many ages. Not content with this simple statement, which had probability enough in its favour on the supposition (itself untenable) that the tree had been equally conspicuous and magnificent at an era so remote, the tradition goes on to spoil all by informing us, that the tree bent down its branches, as if in adoration of, or as if more effectually to shade, its Creator, whom it recognised in that infant child nestled in his mother's arms. Nor was this the only marvel related of the tree; for, as we are assured by Romish travellers, a Moslem shepherd avouched that he had seen it covered with flames, which, however, speedily disappeared; and when he proceeded to examine it, he found it not only uninjured, but the foliage more freshly green than before. This tree is not to be seen now; for what the fire of heaven had respected, the fire of earth has not. Some mischievous shepherds kindled a fire around the trunk, whereby the tree was killed, and in great part consumed. The remainder was manufactured by the monks into crosses and chaplets, and distributed as articles of great sanctity and value. The prime mover in the profanation died the night after, as if by the judgment of Heaven. It is added, that many attempts to plant another terebinth tree upon the spot had been made without effect, as the young plants would not take root; but an olive tree had sprung up of its own accord, and had at length been accepted as a substitute. We owe this curious information to persons who visited the spot towards the close of the seventeenth century, in the early part of which the tree seems to have been destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

Another memorial of the holy family's travels was also supposed to be found on the same road, nearer to Bethlehem, in a locality where the small stones or pebbles bore some resemblance to chick-peas—a fact which no doubt suggested the legend. It was alleged that a whole crop of this useful legume

<sup>1</sup> *Relatione Historique d'un Voyage Nouvellement fait au Mont de Sinai et a Jerusalem.* Par le SIEUR A. MORISON. 1704.

*Voyage Nouveau de la Terre Sainte.* Par le R. P. NAU, de la Compagnie de Jesus. Paris, 1744. The journey was made in 1675.

was turned to stone, because the churlish proprietor refused a handful of the peas to the Virgin upon one of her journeys between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Rauwolff, whom we lately cited, gives a somewhat different version of the story: 'About half way, you pass over a hill, on the top whereof you may see both towns, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Before you is a large valley, which, although it be rocky, yet is fruitful both of corn and wine. In it, towards the right hand, near the road, is an acre [a field], called the Cicer Field, which had its name (I was informed) from the following transactions. It is said that, when Christ went by at a certain time, and saw a man that was a-sowing cicers, He did speak to him kindly, and asked him what he was sowing there. The man answered scornfully, and he said, "He sowed small stones." "Then let it be," said our Lord, "that thou reap the same seed thou sowest." So they say that at harvest time he found, instead of the cicer ~~pease~~, nothing but small pebbles, in shape, and colour, and bigness, like unto them exactly. Now, whether there be anything of truth in it or no, I cannot affirm; but this I must say, that there are to this day such stones found in the field; for as we went by, some of us went into it, and did gather a great many of them that were in bigness, shape, and colour so like unto these cicers (by the Arabians called *ommos*, and in Latin, *cicer arietanum*), that we could hardly distinguish them from natural ones.'

Another local memorial, like to the first of these, was found at Matarieh, on the border of Egypt, in a tree, beneath which the holy family reposed upon their arrival in that country, and which, like the terebinth, bent down its branches in homage to them. This tree, which is a sycamore, still exists, and we have succeeded in finding a representation of it—being, we apprehend, the only one extant—in Dr. William Holt Yates' work on Egypt,<sup>1</sup> from which the figure we give is copied. Near this is a celebrated well called Ain Shems, or Fountain of the Sun, concerning which there is a superstitious legend of the Latins,

<sup>1</sup> *Modern History and Condition of Egypt.* By W. HOLT YATES, M.D. London, 1843.

that it suddenly appeared to meet the wants of the holy family in the retreat they had chosen. 'In order to visit this well,' says Dr. Yates, 'we turned a little out of the beaten track, and entered a tolerably thick plantation on the right, where, in the midst of date trees, citrons, etc., we reclined beneath a venerable sycamore, supposed to be the identical tree whose wide-spreading branches afforded shelter to the holy fugitives from the parching rays of the sun. It is cut in all directions, and has been denominated "the tree of the Madonna." Its shape is singular. It is very large, and the upper part of it has been blown down, or struck by lightning. A number of young



branches grow out from the top of that which remains. It is, beyond all doubt, *very aged*, and there is nothing inconsistent in the idea, that the Virgin *did* seek an asylum beneath its branches. She was as likely to choose this tree as any other; and we know very well that the sycamore sometimes lives to a most astonishing age.' On this we have to remark only, that a tree may be of 'great age' without being 1850 years old, which is an utterly improbable duration for such a tree as the sycamore. Besides, although of great age now, and consequently of great size, it must, if it existed at all, have been young at the time of the flight into Egypt, and there must then

have been older and larger trees, long since perished, more likely to be chosen for the purpose of shade and shelter. But it is useless to examine critically questions respecting which no real evidence exists. It may be added, however, that the local legend merely assumes this to be the same tree which is mentioned in the apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy, which, with other spurious productions of the same class, is known to have existed in the early ages of Christianity. In this curious performance we read: 'Hence they went unto that sycamore which is now called Matarea; and in Matarea the Lord Jesus caused a well to spring forth, in which St. Mary washed his coat; and a balsam is produced, or grows, in that country from the sweat which run down there from the Lord Jesus.' And this is, no doubt, the same legend to which Sozomen, in his Ecclesiastical History, refers: 'They say that at Hermopolis, which is a town of Thebais, there is a tree called Persis, of which either the fruit or leaves, or any small piece of the bark, brought near to sick persons has cured many. For it is said that Joseph, when he fled with Christ and Mary for fear of Herod, came to Hermopolis, and that, as soon as he came near the gate, that tree, though a very great one, was moved at Christ's coming by, and bowed down to the ground and worshipped Christ.' He adds, that he supposes the tree was an idol [trees often *were* idols], and that the devil was affrighted at Christ's coming, and fled the tree; and Satan being thus cast out, the tree remained to be a witness of the fact, and to cure believers of their diseases. To this, and to the alleged downfall of the idols of Egypt on the same occasion, this writer and others apply the text, Isaiah xix. 1: 'The idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence.'

### Thirty-first Week—Third Day.

THE REPOSE IN EGYPT.—MATTHEW II. 15.

It has been already stated that the duration of the stay of the holy family in Egypt is unknown, and cannot be determined by

any facts we possess. It is equally uncertain in what part of Egypt they resided, and how Joseph employed his time there. For any increased expenses which the journey to, and residence in, a strange country may have entailed, with the necessary outlay on the utensils of domestic life, and the purchase of carpenters' tools, a bountiful provision had been made by the gifts of the wise men ; and for the rest, if their stay was protracted, the labour of Joseph in his useful trade may have sufficed ; for we may be sure that such a man, who probably expected that his absence from his own country would be longer than it really proved, would not be content to live upon his little capital, if employment could be found ; nor could any inducement to another course exist among a people who held skilled labour in honour.

But could it be pleasant to him to work with or for idolatrous Egyptians? Without inquiring how far this might have been a discomfort to him, it may suffice to mention, that it was not needful that he should do so, or probable that he did so. It explains this and other points in the position of the holy family in Egypt, to understand that Jews were settled in great numbers, and were in the enjoyment of high privileges, in that part of Egypt nearest to Palestine, which was doubtless the quarter to which Joseph repaired. These would afford employment and support to a refugee from Palestine ; and even if they had known that he fled from Herod, it would have been nothing to his detriment ; for Herod had no authority in Egypt, and he and his were hated by the Egyptian Jews fully as much as by his native subjects—with this difference, that, being at a safe distance, they regarded him with a degree of scorn and contempt mixed with their hatred, which the terrible reality of his power in Judea did not permit to be entertained there.

In fact, the Jews were here so numerous, so privileged, and so free, that Joseph and Mary were, in Egypt, less alone among strangers than common readers may have supposed. The extraordinary monuments of ancient times ; the great and still more ancient river, to which the largest streams they had ever before seen were but brooks ; the exotic character of the

vegetation ; the persons and attire of the dusky Egyptians,—all these must have struck them greatly, and the outer aspects of the most sensuous of idolatries must have shocked their eyes. But then, as now, Jews everywhere sought out Jews in foreign lands, and had no social intercourse, and little if any intercourse save that of trade, with the natives ; and all beyond the circle of Jewish life was beheld vaguely as outer things, and passed before the eyes as a shadow or a dream.

Not only were the Jews at this time a numerous, prosperous, and privileged class in that which had been to their fathers the house of bondage, but they had there a temple and priesthood, after the model of those at Jerusalem.

It came about in this manner :

After the downfall of the Persian empire, to which, from the Captivity, the Jewish nation had been subject, the Ptolemies, who were Alexander's successors in Egypt, were for nearly two hundred years masters of Palestine ; and during that period Egypt once more became a place of refuge for the Jews, and one which afforded, to such as were commercially inclined, opportunities of enrichment which their own country did not present. Alexandria had become, as its founder intended, what Tyre had been—the emporium of the world ; and naturally attracted in large numbers the Jews who, during the Captivity, acquired those commercial tastes and habits which they have ever since maintained, and which have always given them a large share in the traffic of the world. The tried courage in warfare, the fidelity to their political and civic engagements, and the enterprise and probity in commerce, manifested by this people from the time of the Captivity, had given them a high character, as valuable citizens, in the eyes of the first Ptolemy and some of his successors ; and their settlement in Egypt had been encouraged by the most distinguished privileges, religious immunities, and civic rights. All this they continued to enjoy at the time of the flight into Egypt, although that country was then a province of Rome, and Jews found themselves virtually under the same supreme dominion wherever they went, unless into the far East.



It was in the time of Ptolemy Philometer that the Jews in Egypt were enabled to obtain an ecclesiastical establishment of their own, which made them (although, indeed, schismatically) independent of that at Jerusalem. In the reign of that king, Onias, whose father, the third high priest of that name, had been murdered, fled into Egypt, and soon rose into high favour with Ptolemy and Cleopatra the queen. The high-priesthood of the temple at Jerusalem, which belonged of right to his family, having passed from it to that of the Maccabees by the nomination of Jonathan to this office in 153 B.C., Onias used his influence with the court to procure the establishment of a temple and ritual in Egypt, which, like Jeroboam's establishment at Dan and Bethel (but without its idolatry), would accomplish a politically desirable object, by detaching the Egyptian Jews from their connection with, and dependence on, the temple at Jerusalem. This course might seem the more easy, as Onias in his own person represented the legal priesthood; and as the absence from the temple at Jerusalem of the distinguishing symbols of its ancient glory—the heaven-kindled fire, the ark, the divine radiance between the cherubim—rendered imitation more feasible, and seemingly less sacrilegious. Still it must have been felt as a doubtful course, by many even of the Egyptian Jews; but Onias soothed their apprehensions by citing Isa. xix. 18, 19, as both a prediction and justification of this measure.

Having obtained the consent of all parties concerned, Onias looked about for a suitable site, and fixed upon a ruined temple of Bubastis, at Leontopolis, in the Heliopolitan nome, about twenty miles from Memphis; and under his energetic proceedings the place was, ere long, converted into a sort of miniature Jerusalem, with an altar in imitation of that of the temple. Onias of course failed not to make himself high priest; and the king having assigned a tract of land for the maintenance of the worship at this temple (which subsisted till destroyed by Vespasian), the place soon became a centre of Jewish population in Egypt, inferior in numbers to that in Alexandria alone, though more exclusively Jewish. This we

the rather notice, as it is very generally supposed, and is in itself highly probable, that the holy family repaired to, and remained in, this neighbourhood.

The town here—this Egyptian Jerusalem—was called Onion, after the name of its founder. There are now at the place some scanty traces of an ancient site; and in the name of Jews' Town, which they give to it, the natives still preserve the tradition of its ancient appropriation.

### Thirty-first Week—Fourth Day.

HEROD THE GREAT.—MATTHEW II. 19-21.

THE death of Herod at length permitted the fugitives in Egypt to return to 'the land of Israel.' Having been divinely directed in seeking refuge among the Egyptians, Joseph would naturally shrink from returning on his own responsibility. He felt that he needed the same authority for repairing again to his own country as he had for quitting it. And this he speedily obtained; an angel commanding him, in a dream or vision, to 'go into the land of Israel,' for they were dead who sought the young child's life. It is quite possible—it is indeed likely from the terms of this intimation—that Joseph was the first person in Egypt who obtained this knowledge, which may have been imparted the moment after Herod's guilty soul had passed from his body. Had the information previously reached Egypt by the ordinary channels, the order conveyed by the angel would have sufficed, without assigning the reason for it; and the tidings of Herod's death would have been accompanied by the information that Archelaus was his successor, which Joseph did not learn till he reached the borders of Judea. As the case happened, he was spared the trouble of considering what he should do in the altered circumstances, by the command being given, before he knew that the opportunity of returning was presented.

It is observable that he was directed to go into 'the land of

Israel'—the most general description of the country possible—without any special designation of the part of that land to which he should direct his steps, although that eventually proved to be a matter of serious importance. This reminds us of the call of Abraham, who was summoned to quit his own country, for a land the Lord would show him, without that land being designated till some years after, when he was actually to proceed into it. Thus does the Lord love to encourage child-like trust in Him, by affording just so much information for our walk and way as may be needful for our present guidance ; without encumbering us with such knowledge respecting final steps and ultimate results, as might only increase our anxieties, and wean us from that constant reference to Him in which our safety lies. In the same spirit we are taught to pray, 'Give us *this day* our *daily* bread ;' not, 'Give us *this year* our *yearly* bread.'

Herod was dead. And how died he ? The circumstances of his death are worth recording here, not only as showing the awfully *fit* ending of a bad career, but as still further setting forth the correspondence of the man's character with the inferences we naturally draw from the simple facts recorded in Scripture. It is indeed observable, here and elsewhere, how uniformly the sacred writers leave us to draw our own inferences respecting the characters of wicked men. They state the facts concerning them necessarily involved in their narratives, but they do not sit down to write characters of them, after the manner of common writers ; and still less do they shower upon their heads epithets of condemnation and abhorrence. So here, in regard to the massacre at Bethlehem—the event by which alone Herod is known to the Scripture reader,—one of the worst of men the world ever saw is represented as committing one of the most awful of his many crimes ; and yet there is not a single mark of exclamatory indignation ; nor a reference to those other parts of his conduct into which commentators and historians now naturally enter ; nor is anything stated that might lead to the knowledge that his general conduct was not upright. There is, as Barnes remarks, 'no wanton and malignant *dragging him* into the narrative, that they might gratify

malice in making free with a very bad character. What was to their purpose, they record ; and what was not, they left to others. This is the nature of religion. It does not speak evil of others, except where necessary, nor then does it take pleasure in it.'

When the evangelists wrote the evil of Herod's life, the circumstances of that life had not, so far as we know, been published to the world, although matter of familiar knowledge to the people. But now that this has been done, the facts not referred to by them may be advantageously produced, for the illustration or corroboration of the sacred historians. We shall, however, only call the attention of the reader to a few facts concerning his *death*—the life of Herod being too large a theme to be opened here.

When Herod was seized with his last illness, he was sixty-nine years old ; and at that time his eldest son, Antipater, was in confinement, having been convicted of treasonable crimes, but not executed until permission should be received from the Emperor Augustus. Meanwhile Herod grew worse. His disease was of that excruciating and loathsome kind with which God, in his righteous judgments, has often afflicted and dishonoured the last days of great and blasphemous tyrants. It was a fever, accompanied with violent internal heat. His intestines were ulcerated, the feet were swollen, and the tender parts were gangrened, and filled with worms. His breathing was oppressive, and horribly fetid, and he was subject to violent convulsions ; yet in the midst of all, he retained a most voracious appetite for food. The warm baths of Callirrhoe, beyond the Jordan, were recommended by his physicians ; but this remedy being ineffectual, an oil bath was ordered, which threw him into a fainting fit, and nearly proved fatal. He then gave up all hope of recovery ; and after having distributed presents among his soldiers and dependants, he returned from Callirrhoe to Jericho. The agonies of his disorder, the reproaches of his conscience, the disturbances in his family, and the peevishness of old age, increased the natural cruelty of his disposition. He knew that the Jews could have no reason to lament his death ;

and he thought of a truly diabolical device to give them cause for grief. He sent orders throughout Judea, requiring the presence of all the chief men of the nation at Jericho, who, on their arrival, were consigned to imprisonment in the hippodrome. Then summoning his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, to his bed-side, he told them: 'My life is now short. I know the Jewish people; and nothing will please them better than my death. You have their chiefs now in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body, and before my death can be known, do you let in the soldiers upon them, and slay them. All Judea, then, and every family, will, however unwillingly, bewail my death.' Josephus, to whom we owe this information, adds, 'that with tears in his eyes he conjured them by their love to him, and their *fidelity* to God, not to fail in securing this honour to his death!'

About the same time Herod received the desired letter from the emperor, authorizing him to proceed against his son Antipater. On hearing this his spirits revived; but he speedily relapsed, and attempted self-destruction. Although he was withheld from the execution of his purpose, the customary cry was raised throughout the palace, as if he were really dead. These lamentations reached the ears of Antipater, and he forthwith attempted to bribe his guard, by a large sum of money, to suffer him to escape from his prison. But he was so universally hated, that the guard made his offers known, and his father ordered his instant execution. Herod then made a new will, appointing his son Archelaus his successor in the kingdom of Judea; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; and Philip, tetrarch of Batanea, Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Paneas. This was the arrangement which Joseph found subsisting on his return to Judea—so different from that which had been understood when he departed; for, under the previous will, Herod having been then rendered suspicious of his two elder sons, Archelaus and Philip, through the slanders of Antipater, had bequeathed the kingdom of Judea to his youngest son Antipas.

Herod yielded up his blood-stained life in the thirty-seventh

year of his reign, and the seventieth of his age—five days after the execution of Antipater. It was shortly before the Passover, which is a note of time for the season of the year in which the holy family returned to the land of Israel.

Salome was a sister worthy of Herod; and would probably have felt little compunction in executing the fatal orders he had left her. But she feared the vengeance of the people; and therefore she dismissed the noblemen confined in the hippodrome, as if by Herod's orders, before his death was publicly announced.

### Thirty-first Week—Fifth Day.

ARCHELAUS.—MATTHEW II. 22, 23.

WHEN the holy family was on its journey, and drew near to Judea, Joseph was alarmed by the information that 'Archelaus did reign in the room of his father Herod,' and 'he was afraid to go thither.'

The term used in the first clause implies, in the original, that Archelaus was king, or reigned with kingly power. And it is objected that this is not exactly correct, for that Archelaus never was king. The case is this: As soon as his father was dead, Archelaus delivered to the soldiers a letter from the deceased king, in which he thanked them for their fidelity and services, and requested them to continue faithful to his son Archelaus, who was to be his successor. Herod's will was at the same time publicly read, and *Archelaus was hailed as king*. This is surely sufficient authority for the statement. And although, in fact, Archelaus abstained from formally assuming the regal title, as it was necessary that the will of his father should be first confirmed by Augustus, and although eventually he only obtained from Rome the inferior title of ethnarch, yet it appears from Josephus that his own subjects did not trouble themselves with these reserves and limitations, but continued to style him 'king' from the time they hailed him by that title.

But why should Joseph be afraid to remain in Judea because 'Archelaus did reign?' There was ample cause for apprehension of the surviving sons of Herod. This one had the reputation of being the most unscrupulous and relentless; and how well he deserved that character a few days sufficed to show. His reign, indeed, like most other reigns, began with fair promises and golden hopes. On the eighth day after the mourning for Herod, Archelaus gave a feast to the people, and, seated on a golden throne in the temple, he promised them an administration more mild and equitable than that of his father. He, however, deferred the consideration of the various petitions that were presented to him till his authority should be confirmed by the Roman emperor. The people were, for the most part, willing to wait; but, at the instigation of the Pharisees, they demanded the immediate deposition of the unpopular high priest Joazar, as well as the punishment of the evil counsellors by whom Herod was advised to put to death the persons who had torn down the golden eagle set up by the king over the eastern gate of the temple. Archelaus excused himself from compliance with either request, on the ground that he could not well take any public measures until he had been confirmed on the throne by Augustus. This was far from satisfying the people; and the tumult went on increasing, especially as the Jews who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover took part with the disaffected. At length the soldiers stationed in the temple were treated with some insult, on hearing which Archelaus ordered the whole body of the royal guard to march into the temple, where they massacred about three thousand of the Jews there assembled, and dispersed the remainder.

Now, it will be recollected that the death of Herod took place just *before* the Passover; and Joseph being then commanded to return from Egypt, must, according to all reasonable probability, have reached the borders of Judea immediately after the perpetration of this sanguinary act, which, we learn incidentally, occurred *at* the Passover previous to which Herod died. The news of it, therefore, must have met him on his approach, together with the intelligence that Archelaus did

reign. Every one he met could talk of nothing else ; every mouth was full of it ; and dreadful as the fact was, it doubtless reached his ears with a thousand circumstances of aggravation. This, with the general character of the prince, may well have made Joseph doubt whether he could safely execute his design of remaining in Judea ; for there everything combined to render it probable that Archelaus would by no means hesitate to execute the purpose of his father, should it come to his knowledge, or should he even suspect, that the child was still alive whom Herod supposed he had destroyed.

Joseph's doubts as to the right course to be taken under these circumstances were ended by the divine intimation, that he should proceed into Galilee ; in consequence of which, he naturally repaired to the town in which he had formerly resided, and where he had friends and connections. This was Nazareth.

Galilee was obviously, under the circumstances, the safest and best place for the bringing up of the child Jesus. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, though not a good man, was a person of mild disposition as compared with Archelaus, with whom he was, moreover, on terms so hostile that there was not the likelihood that he would, even if it were demanded, give up the infant Christ into his power ; while his own position would render him less sensitive to the apprehension of the infant Messiah, which the ruler of Judea might be expected to entertain. This Herod Antipas was, however, destined to take some part in the history which the Gospel records. He is, in fact, the 'Herod' named throughout the Gospels, except in Matthew's second chapter, where 'Herod' designates his father. We shall hereafter meet with him as the persecutor of John the Baptist, and as the prince to whom Pilate sent Jesus in custody, when he heard that our Lord 'belonged to his jurisdiction.'

We may not find a better opportunity of stating that Archelaus reigned so tyrannically in Judea, that, after seven years, the endurance of his people became utterly exhausted, and they lodged complaints against him at Rome, in consequence



of which he was deposed, and banished to Vienne in Gaul, and his dominion was, as the people desired, made a province of Rome, the government of which was administered by Roman procurators. This was the political situation of Judea during the time of our Lord's ministry. But Galilee remained under the separate government of Herod Antipas for many long years; not only nearly the whole period of our Lord's life, but considerably after his death, even to the year 42 A.D., when, being accused at Rome, by his nephew Herod Agrippa, of a secret understanding with the Parthians, he was deposed and banished to Lyons in Gaul, and his tetrarchy and all his property given to his accuser, who is no other than the 'Herod' of the twelfth chapter of Acts.

### *Thirty-first Week—Sixth Day.*

THE INFANCY OF JESUS ; APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS.—LUKE II. 40.

THIRTY years of the life of Jesus on earth are all but a blank to us.

After the circumstances to which our attention has been given, it is stated that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.'

After this, the incident of the visit to Jerusalem, and of the interview with the doctors in the temple, occurs when Jesus has reached twelve years of age. Then we are informed that 'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them;' and that 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' And this is all we learn till He is thirty years old, and commences his public ministry.

The information which the evangelists were not instructed to give, there were many who, in the early ages of Christianity, undertook to supply; and it would need a larger disquisition than would be proper here, to render intelligible, how it hap-

pened that certain apocryphal gospels, or narratives framed entirely from the fancy, could not only be written by well-meaning men, who thought that they did God service, but that such narratives should have been received and credited by large bodies of Christians. Two general principles seem to have conspired in the construction of the narrative portions of these books. One was the desire to fill up gaps or remove imagined discrepancies in the canonical Gospels, and thus make the story complete. The other was a wish to fulfil all the prophecies of the Old Testament by having ready a fact for every supposed prediction. The operation of these principles will best be shown by a few examples.

The gospel history is fragmentary. Whole passages in the life of Jesus are passed over in silence ; for instance, not only his childhood and youth, as first mentioned, but the period between his resurrection and ascension. But how did Jesus grow up? what were his occupations and tastes? how was He regarded at home by his parents and neighbours? did He laugh? did He play? did He mingle with the boys of his age? did He go to school? did He exhibit any extraordinary wisdom, any miraculous power? did He work at a trade? These were, in some degree, natural questions. Curiosity also seized upon the recorded incidents of his biography, and demanded further information. It wanted to know the private history of the immaculate birth ; what took place on the journey to Egypt, and there ; whether Jesus was circumcised. It asked how his trial was conducted ; who were his judges ; and a thousand similar things ; not forgetting to claim the solution of all historical doubts and disagreements. Such questions in such an age could not fail of receiving answers. Fancy is never slow to gratify inquisitiveness, and inquisitiveness will not be dainty if it only can be satisfied. It seems, accordingly, as if every possible query respecting Christ was met, in these apocryphal gospels, with the most fearless confidence in the faith of the readers, and their incapacity for historical criticism.

Let us give some examples :

The particulars of the flight into Egypt are related with the

utmost minuteness of detail. Besides the docile trees, the spontaneous springs, and the marvellous cures to which we have already alluded, wild beasts escort the holy family, and the robbers of the desert flee before them. But the way to Egypt is long. Perhaps it was difficult to invent miracles enough to beguile it. Jesus therefore shortens the distance, so that the journey of many days is accomplished in one—‘straightway the mountains of Egypt came in sight.’ In a wilderness, as they are travelling, the pilgrims fell in with two robbers, who are afterwards crucified with Jesus; their names Titus and Dumachus. The former bribes the latter to let the strangers pass unmolested, and Jesus predicts his blessed fate on the spot. In Egypt, the sick and leprous are cured, and the dead are raised, by application of the water in which his person or his clothing has been washed. As an infant, Jesus is a perfect man. He goes to school and confounds his teacher. He performs the most surprising miracles. He makes clay sparrows fly; He carries water in his apron; He stretches out a large throne Joseph had made too short; He transforms his companions into goats, and exhibits many other works—all equally marvellous, not all humane, and some very cruel. He is described as the virtual head of the family. No one ventures to eat or drink, or to seat himself at the table, or to break bread, until Jesus has done it before him. If He is not hungry, the family dispenses with the meal. The subject of his discussion with the doctors is, as we shall see presently, reported in full.

It need not be added that all these are pure fictions. But they were fictions designed for a purpose. Curiosity called for them, and credulity accepted them, although they were not at any time, except by the Gnostics, regarded as indisputable history, or as standing on the same level with the gospel verities. Indeed, considering the misapprehension of the spirit and work of Christ which these narratives indicate, and the gross puerilities which they embody, it is difficult to account for the degree of attention they received, but by insisting upon the absence of the faculty of critical discrimination—which has

in modern times been, perhaps, too sedulously cultivated—in the age in which these narratives were produced; and by the evident suitability of this garbage to a taste which the simple truths of the gospel narrative could no longer satisfy. In fact, such matters are acceptable in all ages to minds in a certain state of culture, analogous to that which was then prevalent. If any proof of this were needed, it is found in the fact of which we are personally cognizant, that anecdotes, received orally, but derived originally from the apocryphal gospels, formed some years ago the most cherished lore with numbers of the uneducated, or partially educated classes, who took no small pride in being wise above what is written, and in knowing something which the evangelists had not taught. It was shown also in the veneration with which one of these apocryphal documents, printed on a broad-sheet, was regarded by thousands; being stuck up in the places of honour—over the bed's head or the centre of the mantelpiece—as something peculiarly sacred and salutary.<sup>1</sup>

The Rev. Jeremiah Jones, in his work on the Canon of Scripture,<sup>2</sup> enters largely into the grounds on which these narratives should be regarded as apocryphal and spurious. First, he shows that they were not regarded *as authentic* by any of the ancient Christians. Then the whole contexture of them is false. The design is to relate a large series of miracles and wonderful actions wrought by our Saviour during his infancy, or before He entered upon his public ministry; whereas it is

<sup>1</sup> This comprised the alleged Epistle of Abgarus, king of Edessa, to Christ, and the reply of our Lord thereto. It was from the latter, as the only writing of Jesus, that the document derived the special sanctity ascribed to it. To this was usually added the letter of Lentulus, giving a description of the person of Christ. We believe these sheets have now generally disappeared, the distributors of the Religious Tract Society having made it an object to substitute its useful broad-sheets; an object not always achieved without great difficulty, and a large expenditure of remonstrance and earnest persuasion.

<sup>2</sup> *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament.* Oxford, 1827. See also an article in No. 172 of the [American] *Christian Examiner*, being a Review of *Das Leben Jesu nach den Apocryphen* of Dr. HOFMANN.

certain, by the most incontestable evidence, that our Lord wrought no such miraculous actions, nor indeed any one miracle before He was about thirty years old. This we presently show when we come to consider the miracle at Cana. Further, the multitude of idle and silly stories and of trifling and ludicrous relations, which are contained in these ‘gospels,’ clearly evince their apocryphal and spurious character. Then, again, these writings contain much that is contrary to known truth. Thus the Virgin is reported to have given birth to our Saviour in a cave, *before* she reached Bethlehem. Joseph is described as leaving Egypt for fear of the Egyptians ; whereas, in fact, he left because the ends of his going thither were accomplished. Joseph is employed in making a throne for ‘the king of Jerusalem,’ when there was no king reigning there. It is notoriously false in these writings, that they make Jesus to have been morose and revengeful—striking men dead upon the slightest provocation, or upon none at all. Thus He kills a Jew who reproached Him for breaking the Sabbath ; He kills a boy who in haste happened to run against Him in the street ; He kills his master for being about to strike Him, because He could not say his lesson. It needs not be pointed out that these things are contrary to the design of Christ’s miracles, which were all for the benefit of mankind, as well as contrary to his doctrine, which was wholly against revenge, and inculcated the forgiveness of injuries. These gospels of the Infancy also contained things later than the time at which they are pretended to have been written ; such as the prodigious respect paid to the Virgin Mary, which was not known in the church until the fourth and fifth centuries, and that care for the preservation of relics which can be proved to have been unknown to the primitive Gospels.

The result of the whole is to render us deeply thankful that God has given and preserved to us authentic and divinely inspired narratives, free from all taint of error or stain of man’s devices ; which have stood the most excruciating processes of criticism, and on which every truth-seeking mind is able to rely with the most unwavering confidence.

## Thirty-first Week—Seventh Day.

VISIT TO JERUSALEM.—LUKE II. 41-50.

THE law of Moses required that the adult males of the Jewish nation should appear before the Lord at the place of his altar, three times every year, at the great festivals. Anciently—that is, under the judges and the kings—this obligation had been very much neglected. But in and long before the time of our Saviour, more attention had been given to these festivals, and the attendance at Jerusalem was very large. It was much the largest at the Passover, which was rightly regarded as the most solemn and important of these festivals, and which involved certain observances that could be performed in the sacred capital alone. In fact, there only could the Passover lamb be eaten, seeing that it was necessary that the lambs should be first offered at the altar. The attendance at the other festivals was regarded as less obligatory, or more optional. There was no legal penalty, indeed, for the neglect even of the Passover; but attendance at it was essential to the character of a good Jew, and no one could frequently or habitually neglect it without loss of credit. The fact seems to have been, that Jerusalem was visited during *all* the festivals by those only who lived comparatively near; persons whose abode was more remote were generally content with one attendance in the year, and it was considered a mark of piety to be constant in that annual attendance. Jews in foreign countries—and they were at this time numerous—did not of course attend annually at any of the festivals, but they strove to be present at no distant intervals of years; and then the festival at which *their* attendance was most common was *not* that of the Passover, but that of Pentecost, because the time of the year before and after that feast was most favourable for travel, and especially for voyaging by sea—a most serious consideration in the timid navigation of that age. Thus we see that it was at the Feast of Pentecost, next after the Passover at which our Lord was

crucified, that many strangers from all parts are recorded to have been at Jerusalem (Acts ii. 1-5), and that Paul, coming from over the sea, hastened to be at Jerusalem against the Feast of Pentecost. Acts xx. 16.

Hence we feel no surprise that the Passover seems to have been the only one of the three feasts which the family at Nazareth regularly attended. We are told: 'Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.' It appears, then, that Mary accompanied her husband on these occasions. The attendance of adult males only was required by the law, and even custom did not exact the attendance of females. Mary's going up to Jerusalem was, therefore, entirely a voluntary thing on her part, and evinces the piety of her character, and her great regard for, and delight in, the ordinances of God.

The child Jesus first accompanied his parents when He was twelve years of age. This is usually stated to have been in conformity with regulations prescribing that age for the first attendance of males. But it was not actually required till the age of *thirteen* had been attained, when the child became subject to the whole law, and incurred all the duties of adult church-membership. That our Lord was taken a year sooner, was therefore a proof, that in the view of his parents He had at this early age manifested such knowledge of divine things, and such acquaintance with the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, as demanded that they should no longer postpone his formal recognition as 'a son of the commandment,' as such a person used to be called.

As it is said that 'they fulfilled all the days,' it would seem that they tarried through the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately followed the Passover, and was usually counted as part of it—making eight days in all. It was not obligatory to remain after the actual Passover, but devout persons usually did so.

At length they departed with their company; and although Joseph and Mary did not see their Son during the first day's journey, they felt no concern, presuming that He was accom-

panying some of their neighbours in the large party of northward bound travellers.

This will appear plainer when it is understood, that as the pilgrims to the Passover were required to be all at Jerusalem by the same time, those who dwelt in the same neighbourhood necessarily left their homes together, and, by previous arrangement as to the time of starting, made up a large travelling company. The Orientals always like large parties in travelling, and especially when travelling for religious objects, as we see in the great pilgrim caravans of the Moslems and Hindus. Safety and sociality equally dictated such an arrangement; and no doubt it contributed largely to the maintenance of good feeling and friendly relations among the people, that persons (even if residing in the same town), separated for the year by their various pursuits and occupations, found such opportunities of seeing each other, and conversing together, under the relaxations of happy travel, in a pleasant season, and with pious objects. Indeed, this cultivation of the feeling of brotherhood among the people, was avowedly one of the objects for which attendance at the place of the altar was required. And the same object was quite as much promoted in the journey to and from Jerusalem as in the assemblage there—perhaps more, as people actually travelling are thrown more miscellaneous together than in a town under any circumstances.

The Nazarenes, doubtless, timed their departure from home, so as to fall in with parties arriving so far on their way from places more to the north on the same line of road; and in the southward journey they were joined by parties from places lying nearer to Jerusalem on the same route. Quitting that city as soon as the festival was ended, the persons going the same journey would in like manner leave together, but would throw off parties right and left as they proceeded on their way. Thus the stream of travellers increased as it approached, and diminished as it receded from Jerusalem; being in both cases largest when nearest the city.<sup>1</sup> Thus the northward company

<sup>1</sup> See Ps. lxxxiv. 7, margin: 'They go from company to company; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'



must have been very large indeed during the first day's journey from Jerusalem; and the conclusion of the parents of Jesus, that their Son, although not at hand, might be with some acquaintance in the company, was perfectly natural. When, however, they halted at the end of that day's journey, and Jesus did not join them at the appointed spot, which He knew, as He had rested there with them in the way up, they became seriously alarmed. They went about seeking Him among the Nazarenes of their acquaintance, but could hear no tidings of Him. The company was to proceed in the morning, and it became necessary to decide either to go on with it, or to return to Jerusalem. They probably waited to see the caravan pass out in the morning, in order to make sure that He was not in it; and then, feeling confident that He must have remained behind at Jerusalem, they hastened back with anxious hearts to seek their lost Son.



## Thirty-second Week—First Day.

THE LORD ABSENT.—LUKE II. 43.

WHEN Mary and Joseph had lost the holy child Jesus, they 'sought Him sorrowing.' They loved Him; they knew his value; their hearts were knit to Him; they could not know happiness without Him. Therefore they sought Him sorrowing; fearing that they had lost Him altogether, and that his presence would gladden their hearts no more.

An easy application makes this illustrative of the condition of the soul which loses sight of Jesus in any part of this earthly pilgrimage. 'O dear Saviour!' cries one of old, 'who can miss and not mourn for Thee! Just is that sorrow, and those tears reasonable, that are bestowed upon thy loss. What comfort are we capable of while we want Thee! What relish is there in these earthly delights without Thee! What is there to mitigate our passionate discomforts, if not from Thee! Let thyself loose, O my soul, to the fulness of sorrow when thou findest thyself bereaved of Him, in whose presence is fulness of joy; and deny to receive comfort from anything save from his return.'<sup>1</sup>

But why should the Lord's presence be at any time wanting to us?—why should we be at any time exposed to the misery of his absence from us? We know that it is so; but why should it be thus with us?

Often does it happen that after the most spiritual employments, and the services we count most holy, God seems to absent himself from us, and to withdraw the sensible evidence of his presence. This seems hard; yet our Lord is not a hard Master. He means our good; and it *is* good that we should not be allowed to rest in fixed and stagnating contentments, but should be excited by the pain of his absence and by the fear

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP HALL'S *Contemplations*, Book ii. Con. I.

of losing Him, to seek after Him with the same diligence, the same cares, the same fears, as those with which this sorrowing mother sought her lost Jesus. God means it not, we may well believe, in anger, but in mercy, when for a while He removes the light from before the eyes of a holy person, that he may not fall into a condition of too great complacency as to his spiritual position and estate before God. Even in the things of the spirit, it is too much our tendency to look to the present, to rely mainly upon present comforts and exaltations. We judge well or ill of our devotions and services by the measure of our own apprehensions and expectations ; and if we feel a present rejoicing of spirit, all is well with us, and the smoke of our sacrifice seems to have ascended right upward in a holy cloud to God. But if we fail to realize a present sense of comfort, then we count it ominous of spiritual loss and evil to us, and are led to look narrowly into our own hearts ; which is of itself a good and salutary exercise ; and we seldom need to look much further for the real cause of our discomfort. It is not always in anger that these seasons of gloom are suffered to fall upon us. When the guiding pillar of fire withdrew from the front of the Hebrew host, doubtless the chosen people were perplexed, as they looked into the dark wilderness of waters that lay before them. But presently they found that, although no longer before but behind them, it there became a sign of safety to them and of ruin to their enemies. So it is that if the bright irradiations from the Lord's presence, that are wont to guide and cheer our pilgrim way, do sometimes remove from our sight, and stand behind us, this is no sure ground of fear that his anger has gone forth against us ; for such failures of sensible enjoyment, such cloudings of spirit, are well suited to keep us in humbleness of mind, and to restrain those vain and intemperate thoughts to which we are often tempted in the days of our gladness.

But let us not too readily take comfort from the thought that the withdrawal of our Lord's presence is not always a sign of his displeasure ; for it is often that. Too often do we give Him cause, by our offences and alienations, to hide for a while

his face from us. Sometimes we are puffed up with vain conceits ; sometimes we have been remiss in our waiting upon Him and looking to Him ; sometimes pride invades the dark corners of our hearts ; sometimes we cherish a secret sin, or nourish an unholy thought, concerning which He would have us diligently examine ourselves. Then it is, that when, by ceasing to enjoy his presence with our spirits, we have been led to look narrowly into our own souls, and have been brought, by what we find there, into a proper state of self-abasement, a ray of light breaks through the dusk which has hung around us, and we know once more that He is there.

It is well remarked by a master in Israel, whose suggestions we have here been mainly following,<sup>1</sup> that ‘ although the visible remonstrance and face of things in all the absences and withdrawals of Jesus be the same, yet if sin be the cause of it, the withdrawing is a taking away of his favour ; but if God does it to secure thy piety and inflame thy desires, or to prevent a crime, then He withdraws a gift only, nothing of his love ; and yet the darkness of the spirit and sadness seem equal.’

The sincere soul that misses the presence of Christ, can know no joy without Him ; can find interest in no employment but in seeking Him ; can take no rest till it has found Him. Blessed they who know *how* to seek Him, and *where* to find Him ; for this knowledge spares them much hazardous and fruitless quest. The church, in the Song of Songs (iii. 2), resolves, ‘ I will rise and go about the city, and will seek Him whom my soul loveth.’ That was an ill place to seek Him ; and she is constrained to confess, ‘ I sought Him, but I found Him not.’

‘ I searched this glorious city ; He’s not here :

I sought the country ; she stands empty-handed.

I searched the court ; He is a stranger there :

I asked the land ; He’s shipp’d : the sea ; He’s landed.

I moved the merchant’s ear ; alas ! but he

Knew neither what I said, nor what to say :

I asked the lawyer ; he demands a fee,

And then devours me with a vain delay :

<sup>1</sup> JEREMY TAYLOR, *Great Exemplar*, Part i. Sect. 3. Edit. 1653.

I asked the schoolman ; his advice was free,  
 But scored me out too intricate a way :  
 I asked the watchman (best of all the four),  
 Whose gentle answer could resolve no more,  
 But that he lately left Him at the temple door.

Thus having sought, and made my great inquest  
 In every place, and search'd in every ear,  
 I threw me on my bed ; but, oh ! my rest  
 Was poisoned with th' extremes of grief and fear,  
 Where, looking down into my troubled breast,  
 The magazine of wounds, I found Him there.'—QUARLES.

### **Thirty-second Week—Second Day.**

JESUS WITH THE DOCTORS.—LUKE II. 46.

THE alarmed parents soon found their Son. It is said to have been 'after three days,' meaning three days from the first departure from Jerusalem ; and as one day was spent in going out, and another in coming back, this implies that they found Him on the day after their return.

And where found they Him ?—In the temple ; and, doubtless, that they sought Him there, was the reason that they found Him so soon. It is very probable that Jesus had evinced so much delight in visiting the temple during his residence with them in the city, that this was almost the first place where they sought Him. When they came back the previous evening, they would naturally repair to the house where they had lodged, not only for a night's rest, but as the most likely quarter to obtain intelligence of their Son ; and it may be thought that the people there had informed them of his movements. But this was not the case ; for it would appear that He had not returned to this place to his meals, or to sleep, otherwise they would have found Him the previous evening when He came there.

They found Him 'in the temple'—that is, not in the temple itself, to which none but the priests were admitted, nor in

the court of the priests, but among the doctors—that is, the teachers of the law; and, therefore, in the arcades, or rather in one of the chambers or halls connected with the temple. There were many doctors who taught in the colleges or schools of the city; and there were three learned bodies authorized to sit within the enclosure of the temple itself. These were the great Sanhedrim, the lesser Sanhedrim, and the bench of three members, which respectively sat in the chamber called Gazith, at the gate of the court of Israel, and at the gate of the court of the Gentiles. It is difficult to determine in which of these assemblies our Lord was discovered, or whether it may not have been in the synagogue, for there was a synagogue within the temple enclosure, where, after service, one might be admitted to conversation with the learned doctors connected with it. It was, however, certainly in some one of these assemblies that Joseph and Mary found their lost Son, ‘sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; and all that heard Him were astonished at his understanding and answers.’

It may be observed, that it was the custom for the doctors of the law to be seated on chairs or benches, while the scholars sat on the ground before them. Hence the scholar was said to *sit at the feet* of his master, as Paul of Gamaliel. The Sanhedrim, however, which, when full, comprised no less than seventy persons, sat in a semicircle upon a bench, and the students, arranged according to their proficiency, sat on three benches or forms one behind another, in front of this arc; and behind these benches stood the common or occasional auditors. We must suppose that it was in one of these senses that Jesus ‘sat among the doctors;’ unless it happened that, struck by the profundity of his remarks and his engaging presence, they invited Him near, and gave Him a place among themselves, that they might hear and observe Him better. In that case, however, Joseph and Mary would scarcely have been able to approach Him, to converse with Him in an undertone, as they did.

As to the questioning, great liberty was allowed to auditors

and students in this respect ; the system of instruction being to a great extent interrogative, and students being encouraged to propose their doubts and difficulties, and to put any questions which the thirst for knowledge suggested, to those supposed to be able, from their position and attainments, to afford an authoritative solution. The questions of the young Jesus, founded upon what He heard from the doctors, were so acute and profound, that these learned persons were greatly amazed ; and in order to test the actual depth of his knowledge, they, in their turn, put deep questions to Him. This was an unusual course, and, as such, shows how strongly the learned and venerable persons composing the assembly were impressed and interested by this extraordinary child. His answers to the designedly trying questions proposed by the doctors, afforded them new matter for astonishment. It is, however, surely a grievous perversion of this striking scene to speak of it, and indeed to represent it as the painters do, as 'Christ *disputing* with the doctors.' This must have been founded on the idea of his juvenile character, exhibited in the gospels of the Infancy, and is not warranted by anything offered in the sacred text itself. It is little likely that, forgetful of his tender years, He engaged in eager disputation with the sages of the land ; but we rather suppose Him, in a quiet and becoming manner, putting questions tending to direct their attention to the inner spirit of the Law and the Prophets ; and in the same manner, and to the same end, answering the searching questions put to himself. We cannot doubt that all had special reference to the Messiah, and to the real nature of his kingdom and his work ; and that much of the amazement of the doctors was excited by views so widely at variance with those commonly entertained.

The admiration which this wondrous child excited might have led to further, and probably inconvenient, inquiries after Him, had not the appearance at this juncture of persons of such obviously humble condition in life as Joseph and Mary, claiming to be his parents, abated somewhat of their consideration for Him, and helped to cast a veil over the eyes of such

indolent seekers after truth as they were. The holy child Jesus had, however, left his testimony among them.

Joseph and Mary must have been greatly astonished at what they beheld; and Mary especially could not but obtain some increase of that mysterious reverence with which she regarded her God-born Son. We doubt not that Jesus, when He perceived them, arose dutifully out of his place, and came to them, taking the occasion of withdrawing himself from that admiring assembly. When they were together, the mother of Jesus asked Him gently, not as rebuking Him, but as seeking a reason for his proceedings, why He had remained behind, informing Him that she and his father had been seeking Him with great trouble of mind. Our Lord's reply intimated that they needed not to be thus solicitous on his account, for they should have surmised the occasion of his tarrying behind; and the time must come when the business of his real Father must engage Him wholly. They understood Him not well, or only caught glimpses of his meaning. But Mary, as was her custom, laid up these words of her Divine Son in her heart of hearts, which had become a treasury wherein his sayings and doings were most carefully preserved and pondered.

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Connected with this, the only incident recorded of Christ's boyhood, there are some points which will strike the thoughtful reader of the Gospels as difficult of interpretation. Thus, in Luke ii. 40, it is said of Jesus before He was taken to Jerusalem: 'The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, *filled with wisdom*; and the grace of God was upon Him.' Then, after the incident in the temple, where He had astonished the Rabbins by 'his understanding and answers,' it is said, 'Jesus *increased in wisdom* and stature, and in favour with God and man' (ii. 52). To understand aright these expressions, it must be borne in mind that our Lord possessed a true human nature—a human body, and human mind. He possessed also a divine nature—infinite in wisdom and power. His body increased in stature, and the faculties of his mind expanded like those of other children. And just in proportion as the mental faculties were developed, did the divine wisdom manifest itself in and through them. The human mind of Jesus was *always* 'filled with wisdom'



to the utmost extent of its capacity. Hence the statement of Luke is true, 'and the child grew, filled with wisdom.' As the mental powers expanded, they were able to apprehend and exhibit more and more of the infinite wisdom of the indwelling Godhead. From a human point of view, therefore, Jesus increased in wisdom. There was this essential difference, however, between Him and mere men, that while men get their knowledge from without—from parents, schools, masters,—Jesus got his from within. He drew it direct from his divine nature, which is the fountain of all knowledge. 'His name was Wisdom' (Prov. viii.). He was 'the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. i. 24). In Him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom' (Col. ii. 3). That his human intellect did not at once grasp all the wisdom of his divine nature is true; it is also true that his human intellect did not, in boyhood, proceed to set forth those mysteries of redeeming grace revealed in the gospels; but this does not, in the slightest degree, affect the truth of anything which his human mind, at any period, may have grasped, or may have proclaimed. The view now advocated is fully corroborated by the statement of the Jews, and Christ's own comment upon it as recorded by John. The Jews said, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' Jesus answered them, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me' (John vii. 15, 16).

### *Thirty-second Week—Third Day.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST.—MATT. III. 4; LUKE I. 80.

THE course of the evangelical history now recalls our attention to John, the son of the aged pair, Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Of his early youth we know still less than of that of Jesus. The only passage referring to it is Luke i. 80: 'The child grew and waxed strong in spirit;' and it is added, that he 'was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel.' We do not infer from this, as is done by many, that he had spent all his time from childhood to thirty years of age in the desert—the ordinary course of Jewish education and training being with respect to him neglected,—and that it was *there* 'the child waxed strong in spirit,' upon the sweet nourishment of his own solitary thoughts, and under the special influences of the Divine Spirit,

which were more to him than the instructions of all teachers. This is pleasant, but not likely to have been true. We never hear of children, or even mere youths, withdrawing into the solitude of deserts for spiritual contemplation. It is the act of a man, who had already, as a child, waxed strong in spirit. It is to be remembered that John was born a priest—that is, one of the most learned and highly educated body in the country. All Jews had what would now be called a good common education—that is to say, they could read, write, and cypher; and were, besides, instructed in the sacred history, which was the history of their nation, in the requirements of the law, and in their obligations and privileges as members of the chosen race. But the priesthood received what was intended for and was considered a *high* education. This consisted in a deeper knowledge of all these things, in an acquaintance with biblical Hebrew—which had long ceased to be the spoken language of the people—and in an acquaintance with the regulations and special views which had, in the course of time, been authoritatively deduced from, or founded upon, the law as delivered by Moses, and which, taken together, formed a Judaism materially different, in both external and internal relations, from that which prevailed in the early biblical ages.

Such an education and training as belonged to his order, Zacharias was not likely to withhold from his son; least of all from a son of whom high expectations were entertained. And that John should refuse such an education, and while still, from his tender years, subject to the authority of his father, should withdraw from paternal control and the obligations of his station into the wilderness, would have appeared to his people a very unseemly commencement of a great and useful career; would have been adverse to all the notions of filial duty prevalent in that age and country; and, more than all, would have been very different from the conduct of our Saviour, who, although One whose sandals John declared himself not worthy to bear, deemed that it became Him to remain at Nazareth in subjection to his parents, up to an adult age. Indeed, the humble-mindedness in John, which the declaration just quoted

indicates, little agrees with the supposition on which many have proceeded, that the 'man sent from God' assumed the direction of his own course of life while yet in his nonage.

The priests entered upon the exercise of their functions at the age of thirty; and we know it was about this age that John received from heaven his formal commission as a prophet. This commission probably superseded the obligations which his priestly station would otherwise have imposed; and it may be doubted whether he ever exercised the priestly functions. If he did, these were, owing to the great number of the priests, so easy, that the duties involved could interfere but little with those which his prophetic call imposed. We assume, therefore, that it was in immediate view of the age when he should take his place among the officiating priesthood, and with an ulterior view to his being called upon to assume the special offices assigned to him before his birth, that John withdrew into the wilderness, perhaps some two or three years before he attained the age of thirty. As his parents were aged persons at the time of his birth, they must have been very old ere he reached that time of life. The probability is, that they were both dead some years before; and it is supposable, that the demise of the survivor of them, by divesting him of earthly ties (for he had no brothers or sisters), and by breaking up his home, supplied the occasion for his withdrawal into the desert. This was a course not at all extraordinary in that age. For we learn from Josephus, that many pious and earnest men among the Jews, disgusted with the corruptions of the times, retired into wilderness spots, and there became teachers of religion, gathering disciples around them. This writer speaks, in the account he gives of himself, of one of these persons, named Banus, whose disciple he became. He says: 'Not satisfied, however, with the knowledge thus acquired, on hearing of one named Banus, who spent his life in the desert, wearing such clothing as might be had from trees, eating the food which the ground spontaneously supplied, and using frequent ablutions of cold water, by day and night, for purposes of purification, I took him as my exemplar; and having continued

with him three years, and attained my object, I returned to the city.<sup>1</sup>

The wilderness to which John retired, was doubtless that wild, mountainous region lying east towards the Dead Sea. This was well suited for his purpose; for, besides that there was nothing in its natural character, or the state of the lake beyond, to attract the resort of men, it lay out of the lines of communication between place and place, so that the roads of traffickers and wayfaring men passed not through it. Here he lived much as Banus did, except that his existence was more solitary, as he had not yet assumed the functions of a public teacher, and there was no resort of disciples to him. He was clad in raiment which would wear well, and required no care—such as Elijah and other ancient prophets wore, not as distinctive of their profession (for John had not yet been called to be a prophet), but as the dress of poor men, and best suited to their condition. It is a dress which may still be seen every day in the Syro-Arabian countries: a rough, but stout and serviceable robe of camel's hair, or of camel's hair and wool combined, bound about the waist by a broad girdle of stiff leather. His food was 'locusts, and wild honey' from the rocks, aided doubtless by the native products of the soil. Some question has been raised concerning the 'locusts.' There is a wild shrub, called by the natives the *Carob tree*, and by botanists *Ceratonia siliqua*, affording a pod containing bean-like seeds. It is often mentioned in the Talmud as the food of cattle and swine. It is now used for feeding horses, asses, and mules; and it is stated that, during the Peninsular war, the horses of the British cavalry were often fed on the beans of the carob tree. There is a tradition in the Levant, that *this* formed the food of John, as well as the 'husks' that the prodigal son would fain have eaten. Hence it is often called 'St. John's Bread' and 'The Locust Tree.' There seems no reason for this notion, which probably originated in some European dislike to the idea of the Baptist feeding on such scurvy vermin as the insect locusts. That such was his fare is, however,

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, § 2 : compare *Antiq.* xviii. v. 2.

our opinion, warranted as it is by the text, and corroborated by having witnessed the extent to which locusts are used for food in the East. The devourers are devoured, and that somewhat greedily, so that they furnish with their own bodies some compensation—though certainly a very inadequate one—for the destruction of man's food which they occasion. The pastoral



tribes, as well as the poorer inhabitants of towns and villages, collect them in great quantities, not only for their own eating, but for sale in the bazaars. They may be so prepared as to keep in good condition for a considerable time. The most common process is to cast them alive into a pot of boiling water, into which some salt has been thrown. After boiling a few minutes, they are taken out, and the heads, wings, and feet being plucked off, the trunks are dried in the sun, and then stored away in casks. They are usually sold in this condition, and are either eaten without further preparation, or are boiled, stewed, or fried in butter. They are commonly mixed with

butter (which is always laid on very thickly in the East), and so spread out upon bread, and thus eaten, particularly at breakfast. Europeans in the East do not generally like the idea of eating locusts, though they can at home relish shrimps and prawns, which should be really not less revolting; and to which indeed, after being, as described, boiled in salted water, the locust bears considerable resemblance as an article of food, at least more resemblance than to anything used for food among ourselves.

The explanation here given obviates the objection derivable from the fact, that locusts are only procurable at one time of the year, when they make their migrations. That is equally true of any article of vegetable diet, and even of honey, unless it be kept; and these locusts, as we have seen, can be preserved.

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The expression of the evangelist, 'The child was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel,' unquestionably implies that during boyhood and early manhood John dwelt in the deserts. The word, however, is not to be understood in its modern sense of an uninhabited waste. The name desert (*ἔρημος* in Greek, and *midbar* in Hebrew) was applied by the Jews to a pastoral region, inhabited chiefly, sometimes wholly, by nomad shepherds, as contradistinguished from an agricultural district with towns and villages. The home of John's father was in the hill country of Judæa, and on the border of, if not actually within, that part of it which was called 'the wilderness of Judæa.' There John lived, wandering, it may be, among the neighbouring nomad shepherds, eating their simple food, and clothed in their simple costume. To this day the nomads of that country are dressed exactly as John was—in camel or goat's-hair cloak and leathern girdle. It was in this wilderness also that John began to preach; and from it he went down with the multitudes that had thronged to hear him, to the Jordan, and there baptized them. Hence the prophetic utterance of Isaiah: 'The voice of one crying *in the wilderness.*' From the wilderness the startling cry of John's first sermon went forth; and the solemn words 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' roused the whole land.

*Thirty-second Week—Fourth Day.*

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN.

MATTHEW III. 1-12 ; MARK I. 1-8 ; LUKE III. 1-17.

At length the time arrived when the word of God came to John in the solitudes of the wilderness, where he had, no doubt, long brooded over the iniquities of the times, over the prospect of the Messiah's kingdom, and over the precise nature of that mission to which he knew that he had been nominated, though not yet called to its actual duties. That 'word' made clear to him all that he needed to know. It not only taught him what to do, and that the time was come for him to do it, but it inspired him with all the energies and powers needed for the fit discharge of the high and solemn office to which he was called.

John now no longer shunned the haunts of men, but moving towards the inhabited districts of, or bordering on, the wilderness towards Hebron, he lifted up his voice, 'preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' This region was, however, but ill suited for administering to large numbers of people the rite from which he derived his name of Baptist, or rather Baptizer. There were here but a few scanty streams, dried up in summer. The nearest large body of water was the Dead Sea. But besides that the borders of this lake were mostly rugged and precipitous, the natural feeling, and still more the religious awe, of the people would have shrunk from the idea of performing sacred ablutions in these pungent, saline, unwholesome, and accursed waters. John therefore moved northward, proclaiming his mission, and drawing crowds after him as he went. At length he reached the great national river, which, not only as the sole important stream in the land, but as the scene of the Lord's mighty acts of old, was in all respects suitable for the purpose the Baptizer had in view. He here took his station, most usually at Bethabara, the ford of the Jordan, which tradition pointed out, not only as the spot where

the waters divided to let the hosts of Israel pass, but as that where the waters parted when smitten by the mantle of his prototype Elijah. Here, though the adjacent country is wild and desert, the immediate shores of the river afford many objects of picturesque beauty, in the midst of which John addressed the listening multitudes who resorted to him, or performed to them the rite with which he crowned his instructions.

There has been much discussion whether this rite was then new to the people as introduced by John, or whether their minds were already familiar with it, and ready to apprehend its general purport from some previous practice. It is said that there was an initiatory purification by baptism of those Gentile converts who were not yet thought worthy of circumcision, or perhaps declined to submit to it; and the question is, whether baptism, as an initiation, and to the existence of which there are many allusions in the early rabbinical writings, was ever before this time in use, or was of later introduction. There is no distinct evidence of its higher antiquity; but against its later introduction there is the negative argument, that Jews were not likely to introduce, at a later period, a rite that might seem to be borrowed from the Christians. The question either way does not seem to be of much consequence; for, while we carefully distinguish between baptism as a rite of initiation, used once for all, and the repeated ablutions for ceremonial purification, it cannot be questioned that the perpetual similitude and connection between the cleanness of the body and the soul which ran through the Mosaic law, and had become completely interwoven with the common language and sentiment, together with the formal enactment of ablution in many cases, which either required the cleansing away of some unhealthy taint, or more than usual purity, must have familiarized the minds of the Jewish people with the ideas on which the higher and more solemn baptismal rite is founded, whether this, or something of the kind, had or had not been previously known to them as a distinct and formal observance. The absence of any surprise on the part of the people, or of any charge of innovation against John in respect of his baptism,



does not therefore, as some have urged, prove that the rite was already in use among them.

The news of John's appearing, his preaching, and his baptism, spread quickly through the land ; and from every quarter people of all ranks and sects hurried to the Jordan, and thronged with deep interest and high-wrought curiosity around him, gathering up with eagerness the strong words that fell from one who spoke with all the boldness and authority of a man feeling himself invested with a divine commission, and who seemed, if he were not hereafter to break forth into a higher character, to renew in his person the interrupted race of the ancient prophets, silent for more than four hundred years ; and whose very appearance reminded them of the rude garb and mortified demeanour of Elijah and other seers of old.

He proclaimed loudly to them that ' the kingdom of heaven ' was at hand—that the long-expected Messiah would speedily appear ; and he exhorted them to prepare their souls for his coming, assuring them that God would thoroughly sift his people, and that the unworthy would have no part in the kingdom about to be established. He denounced as false and ruinous the prevalent opinion, that descent from Abraham and the observance of outward ceremonies were the only requisites for admission to the rights and honours of that kingdom, and exhorted men of all classes and characters to true repentance as the one essential preparation ; and, as appointed to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, he employed baptism as a symbol of preparatory consecration to the Messiah's kingdom. But when the Pharisees, who, in their self-righteousness, acknowledged no need of repentance, came to him for simple baptism, he repelled them with stern indignation and reproof, until they also should repent, and evince their repentance by their conduct. And to rebuke their reliance upon their Abrahamic descent as the *one* essential qualification, he gave them the strange and startling intimation that the benefits of the Messiah's reign were not necessarily limited to the chosen race, for that God was able from the very stones upon the river's bank to raise up children unto Abraham. By this he

clearly meant to tell them, that if the Jews disgraced their high descent, God would remove his kingdom from them, and impart it unto strangers—a doctrine the most exasperating to the class of people he then addressed. But the true penitents who came to John found in him a kind and condescending teacher. He gave them no vague and high-sounding words, but adapted his instructions with minute care to their special conditions and circumstances. On the people he inculcated mutual charity; on the publicans (tax-gatherers)—whom, odious as they were, he did not exclude from the ranks of his followers—he enjoined justice; to the soldiers of Herod Antipas—who were then passing that way on an expedition against the Arabian king Aretas—he prescribed humanity, and abstinence from all unnecessary violence and pillage.

These requirements of John appear very moderate in comparison with those of Christ, who demanded at the very outset an absolute surrender of the will and the affections. This difference, as Neander well remarks, arose naturally from the different positions which they occupied. John was fully conscious that the moral regeneration, which was indispensable to admittance into the Messiah's kingdom, could only be accomplished by a divine principle of life; and knowing that to impart this was beyond his power, he confined himself to a *preparatory* purification of the morals of the people. Thoroughly understanding his true position, and the nature of his office, he felt that he was, as the humble instrument of the Divine Spirit, called, not to *found* the new creation, but to *proclaim* it. Although there had been no greater prophet, no greater man born of woman, he is never for an instant exalted above measure into a forgetfulness of his really subordinate and comparatively humble office. Convinced that he was inspired of God to prepare, and not to create, he never pretended to work miracles; nor did his disciples, strongly as he impressed them, ever attribute to him miraculous powers.

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It is interesting to observe the substantial agreement of the preaching of the Baptist, our Lord, and the apostles. Their grand

initial theme was the same. When the Baptist began to preach, his first word was 'Repent.' When our Lord began his public work of instruction, his first word was 'Repent' (Mark i. 15 ; Matt. iv. 17). When Christ's personal ministry was ended, and the Spirit of promise was bestowed on those who were commissioned to carry on the great work of evangelization, their first word also was 'Repent' (Acts ii. 38). Paul, too, when taking leave of the church at Ephesus, and when solemnly declaring that he had kept back from them nothing that was profitable, sums up the whole substance of his teaching in these words : '*Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*' (Acts xx. 21).

What is the real meaning of *repentance*? From the place it holds in the gospel economy, it is manifest there can be no hope of pardon, of acceptance with God, or of heaven without it. Taking the term as used by the Baptist, we perceive that its full signification is indicated by the context. It meant something altogether opposed to the formality and hypocrisy of the Jews ; to their trust for salvation in descent from Abraham, and in external ordinances. It meant a change of sentiment in reference to false views previously entertained, a change of heart from the love of sin to the love of holiness, and a change of life and conduct as the result. So Paul, when explaining before Agrippa the substance of the gospel he was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, sums it up in these words : 'I declared unto them that they should repent, and turn unto God, doing works worthy of repentance.' The repentance which he preached, therefore, was a turning from sin unto God both in heart and life. The full meaning of that important word may be thus stated : 1. A change of opinion regarding a past sinful line of thought and action, causing deep sorrow ; and 2. A change of heart, and resolution constraining to a renunciation of sin both in thought and act, and to a prosecution of a holy life.

### *Thirty-second Week—Fifth Day.*

#### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

MATT. III. 13-17 ; MARK I. 9-11 ; LUKE III. 21, 22.

JOHN had probably been engaged in his ministry about six months,<sup>1</sup> when Jesus took his departure from Galilee, and

<sup>1</sup> Jesus 'began to be about thirty years of age' when he commenced his

repaired to the Jordan to be baptized of him. To our first inconsiderate conceptions, this seems certainly a strange step; and we should suppose that, of all who lived in Israel, Jesus was the only one who did not *need* to be baptized of John. *He* was of the same opinion, for he repelled Him, exclaiming, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me!' This, however, raises the question, What did John then know of Jesus? since he afterwards declared that he 'knew Him not,' until he had received the appointed sign, which, as we know, was given *after* the baptism. It is clear that he must have known something of Jesus, although He then appeared before him as an obscure and undistinguished youth of whom the world knew nothing. The old legends, followed by the painters in their pictures, intimate that Jesus and John were companions and associates in early life. Considering the distance at which they lived, this was altogether unlikely; but after they had become old enough to accompany their parents to Jerusalem at the feasts, it cannot be doubted that they met each other there, and formed that degree of acquaintance which these periodical meetings, together with their relationship, were calculated to produce. Besides, they and their respective parents thus meeting together, it is simply incredible but that John must have been apprized of the circumstances attending the birth of Jesus. Still John knew, from the terms of his commission, that the Messiah was to be specially designated to him by a remarkable sign; and ~~and~~ He was thus made known to him officially, his private knowledge or suspicions went for nothing in his view, and gave him no authority in his public capacity to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. He could not, however, ignore the knowledge he actually possessed, and it could not but influence his conduct; and hence the language which this most unexpected application suddenly drew from him. Or it may be, as Neander conjectures, that these words were uttered, not at the first ministry; and as John was six months older, the interval is six months, if, as is likely, John also began to be about thirty years of age when *his* ministry commenced.

application, but from convictions awakened at a later stage in the progress of the circumstances. The Saviour prayed at the baptism (Luke iii. 21). If we figure to ourselves his countenance, full of holy devotion and heavenly repose, as He stood in prayer, and its sudden association in the mind of the Baptist with all his recollections of the early history of Jesus, we cannot wonder that the humble man of God should have been overwhelmed in that hour, so pregnant with mighty interests, by a sense of his comparative unworthiness, and cried, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me!'

The answer of Jesus, 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,' was necessary to convey to John the assurance that this was altogether fit and proper—fit that He should receive baptism from John, and fit that John should baptize Him. Satisfied with this assurance, John withdrew his opposition; and going down into the water together, Jesus received baptism at his hands.

Still it remains to ask, in what sense Jesus could properly receive baptism from John. The supposition that He submitted himself to this rite with a view to purification, however the notion of purification be modified to meet the case, is altogether untenable, and even revolting. That the idea of purification was to some extent involved in John's baptism of others, may be admitted; but even to them the leading and fundamental idea was that of preparation and consecration, as applied, first, to the members of the Messianic kingdom, announced as being at hand, and, secondly, to its Founder and Sovereign. The repentance and sense of sin which John required as essential preliminaries of the former, could in no way belong to Him, who, when the rite was administered, became revealed to the Baptizer as the Messiah, the Deliverer from sin. But while the significance of the rite thus varied with the subjects to whom it was administered, there was at bottom a substantial element which they shared in common. In both it marked the commencement of a new course of life; but while the baptism of the members prepared them to receive

pardon and salvation, the baptism of Christ was his consecration to the work of *bestowing* these precious gifts. Upon that work He was now about to enter, and it was proper that He should be set apart by his forerunner, and that He should manifest his connection with him, and give his sanction to what he had done. Besides, it would be requisite that some public act should mark the commencement of his ministry, and afford occasion for God to declare, by a manifest sign, his approbation of Him, and his solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah.

This was done upon the instant of his coming out from the water. For, 'Lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him : and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' A question or two is here suggested. '*He* saw' it ; who was it that saw it ? If but one, it was certainly John ; for he declared subsequently that this was the appointed sign by which he should know the Messiah ; and when he saw it, he knew that Jesus was the Christ, John i. 32-34. Being thus intended as a sign to him individually, to enable him to bear witness to the *person* (as he had before done to the *office*) with no uncertain voice, the real object was accomplished when he had seen this appearance ; and it must remain doubtful whether it was witnessed by others or not. We incline to think that it was beheld by those who were present ; for its efficacy as a sign to him would not be in any degree impaired by its being visible to others also ; and his precise statement, that *he* had seen it, was necessary, because, as this declaration was made several weeks later, it is not likely that, in the audience he then addressed, there were any who had been present when the manifestation took place. But whether the persons assembled did behold the descent of the Spirit or not, we make no question that they heard the voice. Indeed, the conjunction of the voice and the appearance, seems to us to indicate that both were meant to be witnessed by all present. John individually needed not the voice, the visible appearance being to him a sufficient sign.

The people needed both together ; because, if they had seen the appearance only, they could not have known its signification without the accompanying words ; and if they had heard the voice only, they could not have known to whom it referred, but would have been likely to suppose that it applied rather to John himself than to Jesus. Indeed, ‘ *This is my beloved Son,*’ seems to bear a clear reference to the visible indication of the particular person which was then afforded. These remarks may perhaps sufficiently meet certain insidious objections which have been founded on the admission, made too hastily by some, that the whole was a vision, which John alone witnessed.

There is one other question : Was ‘the bodily shape’ in which, according to St. Luke, the Spirit descended, that of a dove, or was it only the manner of the descent that was dove-like, the shape being of some other kind ? as when Milton renders the text which states that ‘The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,’ into

‘Dove-like sat’st brooding o’er the dark abyss.’

It is certain that the current translation favours the view that the form itself was that of a dove ; and that it was such, is a traditional belief, embodied in the ideas and monuments of all the churches. Yet we attach no value to these in themselves, apart from the testimony of Scripture, which is much less distinct on this point than is usually supposed. ‘*Like a dove,*’ may be very correctly rendered ‘*as a dove,*’ and in ‘*bodily shape,*’ the last word may mean *appearance* ; and with these amendments, the text suits better the idea that it was some visible appearance which descended upon Jesus with a motion like that of a dove. It has been well remarked, that if nothing had been seen but a dove lighting upon our Saviour, though it might have been noticed as a remarkable circumstance, there would have been no proof that it was supernatural ; for surely the mere fact of a dove descending from the clouds, and lighting upon an individual, could not be considered as a direct or satisfactory proof of the divine interference. Besides, we do

not read in any part of the sacred volume of any similar manifestation. It was certainly, however, a visible appearance; and if it was not that of a dove, what was it? To form a mere conjecture, without the support of Scripture, might not be advisable; but we may still inquire, What was the most usual symbol of the divine presence? Now we know with certainty that this was fire, or light, or 'glory.' Such was the resplendent light which hovered over the tabernacle in the wilderness, and which settled between the cherubim in Solomon's temple. Such, too, was the symbol on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and disciples. We are expressly told that lambent flames of fire, or, what is the same thing, 'cloven tongues as of fire,' came down from above, and lighted on them, and remained upon them. We are entitled, then, to conclude, that after the baptism of Jesus, when it is said that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, a flame of fire, or a bright shining light, was seen darting upon Him from heaven, or moving in the manner of a dove towards Him, and that it rested upon Him, or perhaps surrounded Him, and remained for some time encircling Him.<sup>1</sup>

### Thirty-second Week—Sixth Day.

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS.

MATT. IV. 1-3; MARK I. 12, 13; LUKE IV. 1, 2.

AFTER his baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus withdrew at once into privacy, as if to elude, rather than take advantage of the public attention which had been directed to Him on that occasion. As our Lord made the great events of his life occasions of special prayer, it was doubtless for devotional retirement, and for meditation on the great work He had undertaken, that He now withdrew into the wilderness. That it is distinguished as '*the wilderness*,' and not by any name, seems to indicate that it was in the near neighbourhood of the place where He had been baptized. There is, therefore, sufficient

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. THOMSON, *Exposition of St. Luke*, i. 123-5. Edinburgh, 1849.



probability in the tradition which finds this wilderness in the desolate region east of Jerusalem, overlooking the valley of the Jordan. The high mountain which, on the same authority, is assumed to have been the immediate scene of the 'temptation' that ensued, is from this tradition called Quarantana, and lies about three miles north of the road to Jericho. It is 1500 or 2000 feet high, and is distinguished for its sere and desolate aspect, even in this gloomy region of savage and dreary sights. Its highest summit is crowned with a chapel, still occasionally resorted to by ardent pilgrims, while its eastern face, which overhangs the plain, and commands a noble view of the Arabian mountains, is much occupied with grottos and cells, formerly the chosen abodes of pious anchorites.

It is noted by St. Mark, that He was here 'with the wild beasts,' a circumstance which shows the desolate and unfrequented character of the region to which He had retired. Wild beasts like the neighbourhood of rivers, harbouring, according to their various habits, in the jungles with which they are bordered, or in the ravines of the neighbouring mountains, especially where natural caverns are found. These wild beasts may have been lions, panthers, bears, and wolves, all of which are mentioned in Scripture, and all, except the first, still existing in Palestine. These are all dangerous to men, but they could not harm Jesus; and we may well suppose with the poet, that

'They at his sight grew mild,  
Nor sleeping Him nor waking harm'd; his walk  
The fiery serpent fled and noxious worm;  
The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof.'—*Paradise Regained.*

Of the like long fasting, we have antecedent examples in the cases of Moses and Elijah; and these cases, like this, were doubtless miraculous. It is beyond the powers of nature to endure such privation. There is no *authenticated* instance of any healthy person having remained for nearly so long a time without food; though what may be possible in certain diseased conditions of the bodily functions, we are not prepared to say. The longest well-attested case of abstinence we have seen

recorded, is that of the fourteen men and one woman of the ship Juno, wrecked many years ago on the coast of Arracan, who lived twenty-three days without a morsel of food. There are indeed many stories of persons who, from mistaken devotion, have endeavoured to imitate this fasting of our Lord, and some of whom are said to have exceeded this period before they died of hunger, or desisted from the attempt. But it is likely that most of these tales are fictitious. In certain old churches there are effigies representing persons in the last stage of emaciation—perfect living skeletons, in explanation of which the notion was taken up, that the persons represented, and entombed below, died of starvation in the attempt to imitate this forty days' fast. It may well be doubted whether these effigies have any such signification. The mention this year (1852), by a correspondent of *Notes and Queries*, of such a tradition connected with an effigy of this sort (a corpse in a winding-sheet) over the tomb of John Baret, in the church of St. Mary, Bury St. Edmunds, led to the production of various curious particulars on the subject in successive numbers of that publication, chiefly indicating the churches and cathedrals in which are found such figures of corpses or skeletons wrapped in shrouds,<sup>1</sup> in connection with most of which the same tradi-

<sup>1</sup> One representing Tully, Bishop of St. David, in the parish church of Tenley; one in Feniton church, Devon; one in Exeter cathedral; one in Lincoln cathedral to Bishop Fleming; one in Salisbury cathedral; two in Winchester cathedral, respectively to Bishop Richard Fox and Stephen Gardiner; one in St. Saviour, Southwark; one in St. John's College chapel, Cambridge; one (supposed to be Abbot Wakeman) at Tewkesbury; one in the wall of the yard of St. Peter's church, Drogheda; one in Fyfield church, Berks, of Sir John Golafre (temp. Hen. v.); one in the parish church of Ewelme, Oxon; six in as many churches in Norfolk; one at Ashby Folaile, in Leicestershire, where the reference in the inscription (Latin) to the passage in which Job alludes to the destruction of his body by worms, and to his confident expectation that yet in his flesh he should see God, seems to supply a clear indication of the real nature of these monuments. There are doubtless many more such effigies; not to speak of numerous monumental brasses of the same character. In fact, the number of the examples would alone suggest the purely emblematic character of the device.

tions locally prevail, but are generally disbelieved by the writers; though, as one remarks, it is possible that some of them may commemorate deaths by fasting. Another thinks, that if anything were wanting 'to refute the absurd notion of the forty days' fast,' the figure at Tewkesbury would supply the clue to the real conception of the artist, and show that it was intended by such figures to remind the passers-by of their own mortality, by representing the hollow cheek, and sunken eyes, and emaciated form of a corpse from which life had only recently departed; for in this instance the representation is carried much further, even to the more humbling and revolting processes of corruption and decay, in a corpse that has lain some time in the grave. Another correspondent shows that these monuments were sometimes erected by the individual himself during his life, as an act of humiliation, and to remind him and others of mortality, and of the instability of human grandeur. That the general purport of these representations was simply to remind men that the robes of pride must soon be exchanged for the winding-sheet, and that beauty and strength are hastening to the period when they shall become *like this*, seems to be shown by the inscription on the tomb of John Brigge, Salle Church, Norfolk, 1454:

'Here lyth John Brigge Undir this Marbil stone,  
Whos sowl our lorde ihū have mercy vpon,  
For in this world worthyly he lived many a day,  
And here his bodi is berried and cowched undir clay.  
Lo, frendis, see, whatever ye be, pray for me i you pray,  
*As ye me see in soche degre, So schall ye be another day.*'<sup>1</sup>

When the forty days had expired, our Lord began to feel the sharp pangs of hunger; and it was then that Satan, who doubtless had been heedfully watching an opportunity to assail Him at disadvantage, thought he perceived an opening for his insidious approaches.

But we shall better comprehend the details of this remarkable transaction in our Lord's life, if we first inquire into its

<sup>1</sup> See various contributions in *Notes and Queries*, Nos. 124, 126, 128, 131, 134, 150, 153.

essential character ; for it is one of the most difficult—if not the most difficult—to interpret, of all the events in sacred history. This is evinced by the very great difference in the opinions which have been formed, as to the mode in which the temptations were presented to our Saviour.

If we give to the gospel narratives the most literal interpretation, we must understand that Satan appeared to Christ in some bodily shape—but what shape we know not,—and held with Him, in an audible voice, the conversation recorded ; that he conveyed Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem, and afterwards placed Him on the top of a high mountain, from which a view of the whole world was exhibited to Him. This, we apprehend, is the sense in which the narrative is usually understood ; and although it has many difficulties—some from the nature of the circumstances, and some from the relative position of the parties,—no one can safely say that it is wrong, though he may be at liberty to suggest what appears to him a more probable interpretation.

Some take it to be a parabolic description of an actual event. It is supposed that the tempter may have been the high priest, or some member of his council delegated to discover the real pretensions of Jesus. Having received intelligence of the testimony borne by John to Jesus, this person was commissioned to follow Him into the wilderness ; and, after requiring Him to perform certain miracles in attestation of his mission, held forth to Him the splendid objects of temporal ambition which lay before Him, if He would at once place himself at the head of the nation as its divinely commissioned leader. But it seems highly improbable that Jesus should so soon have become of so much importance to the ruling powers ; and it is hardly reconcilable with the cautious distance at which the authorities observed his conduct even at a later period, that they should at once have hastened to commit themselves by such proposals as the temptation involved.

There are some who apprehend that the temptations must have been presented to our Lord in a *vision*. The strength of *this* hypothesis lies in the fact, that He is said to have been

shown all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, which is literally impossible, and could only be true in a vision; and if this was visionary, why not the rest? All the purposes of the temptation might be as well answered by vision as by reality, and we find in Scripture that such things do take place in visions; as when Ezekiel<sup>1</sup> says: 'In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain;' and John<sup>2</sup> says: 'He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem.' It is also pointed out, that many things are represented in Scripture as being actually done which were only done in vision;<sup>3</sup> and it is remembered that St. Paul calls his being 'caught up into the third heaven, and into paradise,'<sup>4</sup> a vision and revelation of the Lord, and declares that he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body; from which instance, and that of Peter,<sup>5</sup> it seems that neither of the apostles could at first distinguish visions from impressions made upon the senses. The main objection to this view, and one which equally applies to the literal view, is, that the apostle declares our Lord to have been 'in all things tempted like as we are,' and proposes this fact for our encouragement and example. If he does not specially refer to this temptation, he must include it; but we are not *thus* tempted and tried, and the encouragement and strengthening to us are less than were the example to be found in something nearer to our own experience.

Another view is, that the temptations were presented by the power of God making suitable revelations to the mind of Jesus, with a view to his future trials, and are merely called temptations of the devil, because couched under the similitude of Satan coming to Him and offering Him temptations. But this, we fear, tends rather to bewilder than satisfy the mind, by casting uncertainty upon the use of the terms employed in Scripture; though, as it was the purpose of the Father that the Son

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xl. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxxii. 30; Jer. xiii., xxv., xxvii.; Ezek. iii., iv., v.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xii. 7-9.

should be thus tempted, and it could only have been by his ordinance and permission, it must be true that, in the remoter sense, these things may be traced to God.

We shall at present only notice one more interpretation, which is simply this, that the temporal and earthly thoughts which constituted these temptations, and which are parabolically described as a personal conflict with the evil one, were the results of our Lord's own reflections, and constituted a mental struggle, such as we know but too well in our own experience, and in which lay his being tempted like as we are. But a view which derives these thoughts from himself, and regards them as proceeding from his own mind, does not meet the idea which one forms of Christ's nature and perfections. It revolts us as an outrage against his person; and as a writer who has referred to it warmly declares, 'Had Jesus cherished such thoughts in the faintest degree, He had been Christ no longer;'<sup>1</sup> or, as another says, 'We dare not suppose in Him a choice which, presupposing within Him a tendency to evil, would involve the necessity of his comparing the evil with the good, and deciding between them.'<sup>2</sup> Such an interpretation is possible only on the supposition, which some have hazarded, that on this and certain other occasions He was abandoned by the Divine Spirit which rested without measure on Him, and was left as a man to struggle with the temptations and trials of men.

To-morrow we must try to find our way through these difficulties.

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It seems strange that such a thoughtful reader of Scripture as Dr. Kitto should have so far mistaken the one great object of Christ's going up into the wilderness. It was not to elude public attention. It was not for special prayer or devotional retirement. Nothing could be plainer or more emphatic than the words of the evangelist: 'Then was Jesus *led up* (Mark says 'driven,' or 'carried away') *of the Spirit* into the wilderness, *to be tempted of the devil.*' Jesus being freshly endowed with the plenitude of the Spirit, was prepared for his conflict with the prince of darkness.

<sup>1</sup> SCHLEIERMACHER in OLSHAUSEN.

<sup>2</sup> NEANDER in *Life of Jesus*.

It is the Holy Spirit's work to indicate the line of duty, as well as to give strength for its due discharge. Hence the Spirit led Christ up into the wilderness. The words of Matthew and Mark prove, as clearly as language can prove anything, both the personality of the Spirit, and the reality of the whole scene of the temptation. If we had only Luke's account, there might be some doubt or uncertainty on the mind of the reader; but the words of Matthew and Mark no honest and thoughtful student could possibly misunderstand. It formed a necessary part of Christ's work, as the Saviour of his people, to endure temptation and to conquer the tempter; 'For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.' In another place the apostle represents the fact of the Saviour's temptations and triumph as the main ground of the believer's confidence: 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb. iv. 15, 16).

### *Thirty-second Week—Seventh Day.*

THE THREE TEMPTATIONS.—MATT. IV. 3-11; LUKE IV. 3-13.

THE plain object of the temptations to which our Lord was subjected, was to induce Him to exercise, for selfish objects—objects of personal gratification and aggrandisement—the miraculous power vested in Him, and to lead Him to forego his high career as the Redeemer of the world, and the Teacher of a holy and purifying doctrine—involving, as He knew it did, suffering, strife, torture, and death to himself—for the comparatively low and vulgar aims of personal ambition,—to conquer and reign in this world, and to be hailed wherever He went by the acclamations of exulting thousands. That the Messiah would be a temporal sovereign, was the expectation of the people. And the temptations presented to Him were, that He should take his stand upon these expectations, sure of success if He employed his miraculous powers in subservience

to these worldly objects ; first in attesting the truth of his mission to the people, and next, in holding them on to the realization of the hopes they entertained. But let us look at these temptations more closely.

Jesus was really suffering the pangs of hunger, nor was any food to be obtained in that wilderness. There is no severer physical want than hunger (unless thirst be greater) ; none that occasions severer pangs ; none that more tempts to extreme resources for its gratification. Under these circumstances it might seem, at the first view, perfectly natural to one conscious of possessing miraculous powers, that he should exercise those powers in turning into bread, for the satisfaction of his wants, some of the loaf-like stones that lay around. But Jesus at once detected the insidious nature of this suggestion, and perceived how the position He came to fill would be lowered, and his miraculous powers degraded, if He employed these powers to relieve his own need, instead of reserving them as a high and holy trust for the benefit of others, evincing the divine origin of the pure religion He came to establish. He therefore repelled this suggestion by producing the text (Deut. viii. 3) which, with reference to the supply of manna to the wandering Israelites when they sighed for bread, intimates that bread alone was not essential to subsistence, for God had ordained other means, or in his providence could furnish other means, of supporting life : thus saying, in effect, that bread was not so needful as that He should work a miracle to obtain it ; but that it became Him rather to seek some other food, less agreeable, perhaps, but more easily obtained, or await in patience for what the Father's providence might present. By the rule of conduct which was elicited by this temptation, Jesus never after failed to act. It was on this principle that He acted when He suffered the apostles to satisfy their hunger with the corn they had plucked, rather than work a miracle to supply them with better food. On this principle He acted, when He gave himself up to the officers sent to apprehend Him, rather than seek deliverance by a divine interposition. Of the same kind, too, was his trial when He hung upon the cross, and



those that passed by said: 'If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.'

The next temptation presented by Satan was subtle in the highest degree. It was that Jesus should try the existence of his power by making such an ostentatious use of it, that if it failed it would humble or destroy Him; or, if it succeeded, must commit Him to the popular views of the Messiah's temporal reign. It was that He should cast himself down from the highest summit of the temple. The text quoted as an inducement—that He should be borne up by angels rather than that He should dash his foot against a stone—seems to indicate that Satan meant to suggest a doubt of the power, in order to tempt to its unworthy exercise. But the result would probably have been, that, if He had not this power, He would be dashed in pieces; and if He had, and accomplished this feat, He might have seemed to descend from heaven, and would in all probability have been hailed with wonder and delight by the assembled worshippers, as the long-desired Messiah. This would have formed a beginning, well suited to the expectations which the Jewish people entertained. But this temptation also was repelled by a convincing text from Scripture: 'It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;' meaning that one should not throw himself wilfully into needless danger, in trust upon the Lord's deliverance, or to try whether the Lord would deliver him or not. On this principle also our Lord acted through his whole career. He never voluntarily exposed himself to peril. He always employed wise and prudent means to escape the toils of his enemies; and He went forth with trust in God and in submission to his will, to meet only such dangers as his divine mission made necessary, and such as He could not avoid without unfaithfulness to the great task He had undertaken.

The baffled tempter now more plainly and broadly disclosed his real object, and openly played his last stroke. He showed to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and declaring that they were at his disposal, offered them all

as the price of submission to him. The homage which he asked was not divine worship. Even the devil would not have been mad enough to ask *that* of Jesus. But it was that He should essentially serve him, and render him homage 'as the prince of this world,' by relinquishing his spiritual mission, and making it such a temporal one as the Jews looked for; undertaking, in case He would consent to the establishment of an outward kingdom with worldly splendours, that the most extravagant of *their* expectations with regard to the universal dominion of the Messiah should be realized. And undoubtedly, if it had been possible that Jesus should have consented to appear as king of the Jews, the whole nation would have crowded with enthusiasm to his standard; and it is difficult to assign any limits to the dominion of a prince, who could support his armies, and destroy his enemies, by miracle.

The boldness of this suggestion of Satan required a stern and unmistakable rebuke. Jesus had suffered him thus far, but now He sends him away with indignation: 'Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' *Him only*; this was the key of all. There could not be two masters—no divided empire. The kingdom must either be wholly spiritual—that is, of God; or wholly temporal—that is, of the devil. And there could be no question *which* it should be: 'Him **ONLY** shalt thou serve.' 'No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

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Jesus was forty days in the wilderness. Had we only the narrative of Matthew, we might suppose that it was at the close of that period his temptation began; but both Mark and Luke show that during the whole time He was under temptation. There is no contradiction in the accounts. They supplement each other, and contribute to the exhibition of a full picture. All the acts and forms of temptation are not specified; such only are related as have a practical bearing, and convey a useful lesson to mankind. The closing temptations were probably the most powerful. In planning them, Satan exercised all his cunning; and in order to carry them out, he used all his power. Hence, probably, he

assumed a bodily form, and appeared face to face before the Incarnate God.

What was Satan's opinion of Christ? Did he really know Him? Did he fully understand his person and his character? There can be no doubt that he did understand his office and his object in the world; though, probably, like some modern sceptics, he could not comprehend, and therefore did not credit, such a complete union of divinity and humanity as would render Jesus proof against all his assaults. He saw that Jesus was man, and he therefore concluded He was fallible. He probably knew that He was in some way connected with Godhead; but he seems to have doubted whether the connection was so close as to render the humanity omnipotent. At any rate, whatever may have been his fears or his hopes, his faith or his scepticism, he was resolved to make a bold stroke for the world's sovereignty. He had seen man in paradise, all the bounties of a newly-created world dropping into his open hand, the Creator himself smiling benignantly upon him; he had seen man still pure as the God who made him, without a want unprovided, a desire unsatisfied; he had seen man thus, and he had tempted and enslaved him. Why might he not succeed again? Why might he not triumph in the wilderness as he had triumphed in paradise? This new man might, it is true, be more powerful than the other; He might have a clearer intellect to detect wiles, and a stronger moral sense to resist persuasions; but circumstances were against Him. He was careworn, weary, thirsty, hungry. There was no companion or friend with Him. There was no retreat from the wild beasts, no shelter from the night winds. There was no river of paradise to allay thirst, no tree of paradise to satisfy hunger. All around were parched ravines, scathed cliffs, bare hill-tops. Why, then, might not this man, powerful as He was, in very despair, listen and yield? So the tempter may have reasoned; and, so reasoning, he summoned up his energies for the final struggle.

In the threefold temptation recorded by the evangelists, we have combined, in a concentrated form, the whole range of human temptation. The Apostle John contrasts the love of the world with the love of God. The former comprehends all sin; the latter all righteousness. He then sums up, in a single sentence, the whole contents of 'the world': '*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world*' (1 John ii. 16). These three, there-

fore, constitute the whole range of sin, and the sole channels of temptation. Satan knew this, and he tried them all with Jesus. He first assailed Him through the 'lust of the flesh'—the natural appetite which man must satisfy if he would live. This failing, 'the pride of life' was next assailed—the natural desire for display, for exhibiting power. He tried to induce Jesus to prove, by a notable miracle, the power which He laid claim to. The final assault of the tempter was upon 'the lust of the eyes'—the appetitive soul; *ambition*, in fact. Satan in some way showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and then offered the whole as a splendid gift if He would only do him homage. The apostle affirms that Jesus was 'in all points tempted like as we are:' here we have proof of it. Every form which temptation could assume He encountered and defeated.



## Thirty-third Week—First Day.

‘TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE.’—HEB. IV. 15; LUKE IV. 13.

It demands particular notice that, at the end of the history of our Lord's temptation, it is stated, that ‘when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him *for a season.*’ This plainly implies, and indeed expresses, that he returned at a future time—once, if not oftener. Accordingly, towards the close of the life of Jesus, there is a clear intimation of another great temptation—the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. The presence of Satanic influence does not indeed appear in the history of that transaction; but just before He arose to proceed to that scene of bitter trial, our Lord, in anticipation of what awaited Him, distinctly expressed its nature to his disciples: ‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.’ ‘The prince of this world’ is of course the same Satan who appears in the temptation before us, and who here indeed distinctly claims the principedom of the world. In the second instance it is as distinctly said that ‘he cometh,’ as in the first that ‘he came;’ yet in the history of the agony we find no notice of his presence in any bodily or visible shape, and indeed, but for this antecedent intimation, we should not with certainty know that Satan had any part in that awful scene. This similarity may lead us to inquire, Whether, more in the wilderness than in the garden, Satan was present otherwise than by his suggestions, which being at once recognised by Christ as from him, rendered him as really present as if he had stood in a bodily shape. Indeed, the difference is small, and not worth contending for. If we believe that there is such a being as Satan, and that he is a personal agent, there can be no difficulty in believing in his personal presence; and if per-

sonally present, it is easy to conceive that he could not be hid from Jesus ; although, under the like circumstances, *we* only become aware of his presence by the nature of his suggestions, by the torturing pressure of his hot hand upon our souls.

It is therefore really immaterial whether Satan did or did not appear in a more distinct embodiment in this temptation than in any other. However understood, his presence was not the less actual, nor his temptation the less real.

It appears to us, that on the two occasions to which we refer, the presence of Satan is indicated by the evangelists with more or less distinctness, and in the instance before us with the greatest possible distinctness, for the simple and single purpose of showing that the suggestions with which our Lord was tried, and which constituted the temptation, were such as could not possibly have proceeded from his own mind (as one of the interpretations stated two days since supposes), but could only have been presented to Him from without. It was thus with the second Adam as with the first ; and Satan sought to take the same course with Him which he had found so fatally successful with the first Adam, only imparting a different character to the suggestions, as suited the differences in their circumstances, their endowments, and their conditions.

There was, however, this serious difference : Adam was not able at once to discover the source from which the temptation came, and Satan did not find that his heart offered a soil absolutely incapable of receiving and nourishing the evil seed he desired to sow. But Jesus at once beheld the tempter and the temptation revealed in their naked deformity, and in his soul there was no place where the evil thoughts which Satan offered could take root. It is thus that, in reference to the last recorded temptation, our Lord says : 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing in me.*' This was his security, that though the suggestions might try Him, and try Him severely, as they did in this latter instance, they could not prevail over Him ; He was sure to be at last victorious. In reference to the text we have just cited, a commentator of our own day well paraphrases our Lord's expression : 'There is in me

no principle or feeling that accords with his, and nothing therefore by which he can prevail;’ and he goes on to remark: ‘Temptation can only prevail because there are some principles of evil that accord with the designs of the tempter, and which may be *excited* by presenting corresponding objects, till our virtue be overcome. Where there is no such principle, temptation has no power. As Jesus had no such evil principle, as He was not at all under the influence of any evil depravity or attachment to forbidden objects, Satan had nothing in Him, and hence could not prevail.’<sup>1</sup> Of precisely the like purport, corroborative of this, is the passage in which the apostle speaks of our Lord as ‘tempted like as we are, *yet without sin.*’ Tempted like as we are by Satan from without, but being without sin, necessarily incapable of being tempted by evil thoughts originating from within; and although, as a man, not incapable of moral suffering and struggle when such temptations were presented to his mind, yet sure to triumph because they were altogether abhorrent to the sinless nature of One who could lift up his head, in the midst of those that watched for his halting and thirsted for his blood, and cry aloud, ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’

In closing the consideration we have given to this subject, we must not omit to point out the profit which we may derive from the example of our Saviour in repelling the suggestions of Satan. The method He employed was doubtless intended for our instruction. He repelled temptation by calling to mind apposite passages of Scripture; and cannot we do the same? ‘All that we have to do is to treasure up in our memories passages of Scripture which relate to temptations, and especially those passages that refer to the sin which most easily besets ourselves. . . . By this simple, easy way we shall be enabled, with the blessing of God, to escape or resist every temptation. For to our own humble exertions we must ardently pray that God would direct and strengthen us, and enable us to overcome every difficulty. And let it be impressed on our minds, that every successful resistance to temptation will render

<sup>1</sup> BARNES on this text.

us better, more vigorous, more exalted, more improved, and more happy Christians.’<sup>1</sup>

### Thirty-third Week—Second Day.

THE BAPTIST AND THE DELEGATES.—JOHN I. 19-27.

WHILE Jesus was away in the wilderness, the wonderful success of John the Baptist, the crowds that followed him, and the influence he was gaining over the minds of the people, attracted the serious attention of the ruling authorities among the Jews ; and the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, which was especially charged with the care of religious matters, felt itself bound to send a deputation of its members to ascertain from John’s own mouth the doctrine he taught, and the nature of his claims as a religious teacher—indeed, as a prophet. It is intimated incidentally that those who were sent were Pharisees, a party whose influence seems at that time to have been paramount in the council ; and the delegates framed their interrogatories in conformity with the popular traditions, or even with the prophetic writings, which persons of the Sadducean sect would not have done.

It would appear as if some of the followers of John had begun to question whether he himself might not be the Messiah ; and hence the first inquiry is directed to that point. It has been suspected that, as some of the delegates were priests, they would not have been reluctant to find the Messiah in John, who belonged by birth to their own order. But nothing was better known to them than that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah, and they would not have thought of asking such a question of one whom they knew to be of the Levitical tribe, had not some rumours reached their ears. John, who avowedly did not like the Pharisees, and had on a former occasion called them a ‘ brood of vipers,’ answered this and the other questions put to him with remarkable but decisive bluntness. He told

<sup>1</sup> Dr. THOMSON’S *Expository Lectures on St. Luke*, i. pp. 140, 141.



them plainly he was not the Christ. 'What then?' said they. 'Art thou Elias?' To this also he answered: 'I am not.' But did not Jesus himself say that he was? They thought, as we formerly explained, that Elias was to come in his own proper person, and in that sense—the sense of their question—he certainly was not Elias. Had they inquired whether he came in the spirit and power of Elias, he would have given a different answer. But it may be asked how they, knowing the birth and parentage of John, could conceive it possible that he, in their sense, could be Elias. The answer is found in the fact that the Jews at this time believed in a sort of transmigration of souls, and might therefore have supposed that John was in a literal sense no other than Elias. We find a curious instance of their belief in this respect in Luke ix. 7, where the Jews take Christ to be John the Baptist resuscitated.

John was then asked by the delegates if he was '*that* prophet.' This is sometimes supposed to refer to the prediction of Moses, that the Lord should raise up unto them *a prophet* like himself; but the Jews themselves understood this text to refer to the Messiah, and the question, if thus understood, had therefore been already answered, when he acknowledged that he was not the Christ. They probably meant to ask if he was Jeremiah, to whom tradition assigned the name of 'the prophet' who was to rise from the dead at the coming of the Messiah, in order, as it was supposed, to restore to the temple the ark and altar of incense, which he was said to have concealed in a cavern at the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>1</sup> To this question John answered by a simple 'No.'

Somewhat affronted at the rude curtness of his answers, the delegates reminded him that they questioned him not in their own name, but on the part of those who were authorized to inquire into such matters, and then asked him the plain question, 'Who art thou?' to which he replied, that he was the harbinger described in the prophet Isaiah, who, according to the custom in the progresses of oriental monarchs, was to go before, and, cutting through mountains and bridging valleys,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Macc. xv. 13, 14; 2 Esdras ii. 16-18.

to make a wide and level way for the advance of the Great King.

The carnal mind of those who had been sent to John, did not allow them rightly to comprehend his reply; and they asked him sharply, why then and by what authority he baptized, if he was none of the personages they had designated. This was a natural question, for persons belonging to a sect so much absorbed in ritual observances, to ask. If the rite of baptism was not previously known, and this we have explained to be uncertain, their question demands on what authority he ventured to introduce a new rite. If the rite was known, as used for the initiation of Gentile converts, then their question requires him to state how he dared to extend that rite to Jews also, who had already, by the rite of circumcision, been placed under the full privileges and obligations of the law of Moses. Their tone is certainly that of persons inclined to exercise their authority in forbidding him to baptize. Indeed, it was probably John's conviction that the ruling powers regarded him with little favour, which occasioned the brevity and reserve of his answers. In reply to their last question, he becomes, however, more full and explicit. He tells them that his was merely a prefigurative baptism—a baptism of water, and that it claimed not to be the real baptism, the baptism of the Spirit, which was the work of



One who then stood unrecognised among them, and whom he then forbore to point out, but in relation to whom he was only

as a servant or a disciple. This he expressed by the emphatic figure : 'The thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.' The loose shoes or slippers in use among the modern Orientals are easily cast off by the wearer ; but this was not the case with the ancient sandals, which, being bound to the feet by thongs, could not be unfastened without some trouble. The operation was, therefore, usually performed by servants ; whence the act of unloosing the sandals of another became a popular symbol of servitude. Or it may, in this and other instances, mean no more than discipleship ; for we find that, among the Jews, scholars frequently performed this service for their teachers or rabbis ; and it is laid down in the Talmud, that 'All services which a slave renders to his master, the disciple renders to his rabbi.'

### *Thirty-third Week—Third Day.*

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.—JOHN I. 29-51.

It appears from the words in which John closed the discussion with the delegates from the Sanhedrim, that Jesus himself was present among the auditors of that discussion. It thus seems that, after the temptation, He sought the spot where John was then preaching and baptizing. His object in this was, doubtless, that his first selection of disciples might be made from those who had profited by the training of John, and who had most fully realized the objects of his preparatory mission. Besides that He would in this manner obtain followers from those already prepared to receive Him, He would also, by transferring some of John's most ardent disciples to his service, connect the ministry of the great harbinger with his own.

On the occasion referred to yesterday, John, in that public audience, was content to declare the presence of the mightier Teacher of whom he had spoken, without designating the individual. But as he next day stood, probably surrounded by his followers, and saw Jesus approaching, he did not hesitate to point Him out distinctly ; explaining the grounds, furnished

by what occurred at his baptism, on which he knew Him to be the Messiah. The terms in which he described Him are very remarkable: 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.' It has been suggested, and is altogether likely, that the expression was founded upon a circumstance then actually passing before their eyes; namely the passage, at this ford, of flocks of sheep and lambs, from the rich pastures beyond the Jordan, on their way to Jerusalem, to supply the daily sacrifice, or to meet the demands of the Passover. Recollecting that the Messiah had been predicted by Isaiah (liii.) as a lamb led to the slaughter, to show his patience under suffering, and his readiness to die for man's redemption, the allusion was perfectly natural, whether suggested or not by such a circumstance. Besides, it gave John occasion to protest against the common notion of the Messiah's office, of which the lion, rather than the lamb, would have been the fit, and, to the nation generally, the more acceptable emblem. It is impossible to understand these words in any other sense than that John expected Christ was to die for the sins of the world; for a lamb could only bear sin by a sacrificial death. It has, indeed, been objected, that a lamb is not a sin-offering under the law. But Lev. iv. 32-35 shows this to be a mistake. Were it otherwise, however, the real sense is illustrated by the use of the analogous term in other parts of the New Testament; as where Christ is described by analogies drawn from the paschal lamb,<sup>1</sup> and is represented as 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' It would thus appear that John possessed a more exact conception of the objects for which Christ came into the world than has usually been ascribed to him. If these words mean anything, they mean the doctrine of the atonement for sin by the death of Christ—the true evangelical view, which was not understood even by the apostles themselves until after the resurrection. Whether John had been led to this view by the study of that chapter in Isaiah to which he apparently refers, or had received special enlightenment from on high, must be left to conjecture.

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 36; 1 Cor. v. 7.

The next day, John stood with only two of his disciples, and, seeing Jesus pass by, he repeated the indication which he had given the day before, probably to a larger assembly: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' Impressed no less by the deep import of these words, than by the look of fixed attention and reverent regard which the speaker fixed upon the person who went by, and encouraged, doubtless, by an approving smile from their master, they left his side, and followed the Stranger's steps. One of these two was Andrew, the brother of Peter. His companion is not named; but the narrator being John, it is usually understood that the other disciple was himself, as on several occasions this evangelist avoids expressly pointing to himself—modestly refraining from making his personal relations conspicuous.

Jesus walked on thoughtfully; and the two young men, though they followed Him closely, respectfully forbore to accost Him, or were perhaps reluctant to break in upon his meditations. But perceiving that He was followed, He turned round and asked them what they wished. They were too modest to obtrude themselves at once as his companions; and, therefore, merely requested to know where He dwelt, that they might at another time call upon Him. But Jesus, full of love, took them immediately along with Him. It was now four o'clock; and, attracted by his blessed discourse, they remained with Him till the close of the day. He then dismissed them, in order to allow the seed which He had quietly sown, to develop itself within them.

This was the real beginning of the Christian church.

Andrew knew that his brother Simon was among those who earnestly 'waited for the consolation of Israel.' He therefore hastened to impart to him the joyful tidings that the Messiah had indeed come; and, together, the two brothers then repaired to Jesus. As soon as the Lord beheld Simon, and without waiting for Andrew to introduce him, He accosted him by his name: 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas.' This means a stone, or rock; and 'Peter,' as he is otherwise called, is a Greek word of the same meaning. The

analogy is not seen in our language ; but it is in French, in which *pierre* means both 'Peter' and 'stone.' Of this custom of changing names we have formerly spoken at some length ; and it now only remains to add, that the Jewish rabbis were also in the habit of giving to their disciples certain by-names. In the present instance, Jesus, knowing perfectly what was in man, looked at once through Peter, and saw in him a precipitate boldness, combined with an undue measure of confidence in himself. His character, however, purified and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, Jesus foresaw would be peculiarly serviceable in the establishment of the Christian church ; and hence the significant application of the name He bestowed.

These three had been *directed* to Jesus. The next was *summoned* by himself. This was Philip, a townsman, and probably a friend, of Andrew and Peter—all the three, indeed, being fishermen of the lake of Tiberias, a body of water in which fish are still most abundant. It is likely that Philip had already heard what the two brothers had to impart, and was hence prepared to follow Jesus, when He called to him, 'Follow me!' Philip sought out a friend of his, named Nathanael, and announced to him exultingly that he had found the long-promised Messiah in the person of 'Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathanael started at this, and in all sincerity asked, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' a very emphatic expression of the ill-repute in which this place was held. Philip, who was a man of few words and blunt manners, did not think it worth while to argue against this prejudice, but said to him just the very best thing possible, 'Come and see.' So they went together ; and as they drew nigh, Jesus saluted Nathanael with the emphatic and memorable words, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' Astonished and perplexed, Nathanael inquired from what source Jesus derived his knowledge of him ; on which our Lord, casting on him a look of divine complacency, said, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.' It is known that in this age pious Jews, contrasted with the pharisaical hypocrites, who loved to pray

in the public streets and market-places, sought the privacy of their high-walled gardens, where, under the shade of spreading trees, they might pour out their souls before God. Convinced by this, that all things were open and known to those eyes which now looked so benevolently upon him, Nathanael at once cast off all his first doubts, and cried out with fervour, ‘Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God ; Thou art the king of Israel !’

The name of Nathanael does not occur in the list of the apostles ; but he is universally supposed to be the one who, in that list, is distinguished by his father’s name, Bartholomew, which signifies, ‘son of Tolmai,’—a designation which leaves a vacancy for his own proper name, which we shall probably not err in supplying by that of ‘Nathanael.’

### *Thirty-third Week—Fourth Day.*

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES.—JOHN II. I-11.

IN the neighbourhood of Nazareth there are two villages, one of which bears the name of Kefr Kenna, and the other of Kana el-Jelil ; the former five miles to the north-east, the latter about seven miles to the north. In Kana el-Jelil, it is not difficult to recognise the ‘Cana of Galilee,’ where we next find our Saviour, although the former is usually pointed out by the monks, and other guides, as the Cana of the New Testament. Its nearness to Nazareth probably furnished the ground of this identification, notwithstanding the great difference between its name and that of Cana of Galilee, and the all but exact identity of the other. The indication of this fact is one of the many obligations Biblical topography owes to Dr. Robinson ; and his conclusion in this respect will, no doubt, be henceforth generally accepted. Thus understood, Cana of Galilee, which seems to have been a thriving place at the time of our Lord, inhabited by prosperous persons, is now a ruined, neglected spot, but little known. ‘War, bloody relentless war, has swept

over the little Cana of Galilee ; fire and sword have laid waste the peaceful village in which Christ met the rejoicing wedding party.'

We find Him there 'on the third day' after Nathanael had joined Him. He and his disciples might have gone, without difficulty, from the banks of the Jordan to Cana in the two previous days, the distance being about fifty miles. It is possible, however, that only Philip and Nathanael accompanied Him ; for, not long after, we shall find the other three engaged in their usual occupations on the lake of Tiberias, so as to suggest the probability that Jesus did not, on this occasion, take them on with Him, but had appointed to meet them on the shores of the lake at some future day. We know from John xxi. 2, that Nathanael belonged to this place ; and the probability seems to be, that something in connection with him induced Jesus to accompany him and his friend Philip thither ; and that, on their arrival, a wedding-feast was found to be at hand, to which his mother had been invited, and, it is probable, had already come from Nazareth. This fact suggests that she was an acquaintance of one of the families united by this marriage, if not related to it ; and it was probably her mention of the fact of her Son's arrival, that caused the invitation to be extended to Him and his disciples, one of whom, at least, was already known in the place. That He did not go to the wedding at Cana by previous invitation, seems to be shown by the long time He had been away from the neighbourhood, and by the disciples being included in the invitation, He having had no disciples before.

The mother of Jesus appears to have taken a part in the concerns and proper ordering of this cheerful feast, which would alone seem to intimate that she was a friend of the family. Thus, perceiving that the wine provided was likely to prove insufficient, she mentioned the matter to her Son. Her object in doing so is not quite clear. Some have supposed that the unexpected addition to the party, made by himself and his disciples, having been unprovided for, was the occasion of this insufficiency ; and that Mary meant to hint that it would



be proper for Him to withdraw with his followers, and by thus breaking up the party, spare the host the disgrace of the insufficient supply for his guests being exposed. Some imagine that she had been so accustomed to see Him work miracles in the exigencies of private life, that she expected He would, by such means, supply the present need. The numerous miracles recorded in the apocryphal gospels of the Infancy would certainly support that interpretation ; but against it, and against the fables on which it is founded, we have the positive assurance of the evangelist that THIS was the beginning of his miracles. Another explanation is, that Mary had no very definite object in view ; but having in all things found Him a safe and wise adviser, she turned to Him now, in the hope that He might suggest some means of help in this emergency. We should ourselves prefer this interpretation, were it not that our Lord's reply clearly intimates that his mother's intimation involved something more exacting than was becoming even in her, or than was agreeable to Him. It seems to us, therefore, likely that, from all she had seen, and heard, and pondered over, she had realized such an idea of his power as to conclude it fully equal to this singular emergency, however He may have thought fit to restrain it hitherto. She may also have had something of the motherly feeling that her Son was altogether too slow in bringing himself forward, and that it might be well to quicken Him a little, by pressing upon Him this opportunity of bringing himself under the public notice.

His answer was : ' Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.' Dismissing the idea that there is anything of rebuke in the term ' Woman,' as applied to his mother—for it is the same with which, in the tenderness of his dying hour, He accosted her from the cross,—it must yet be acknowledged that his answer, as a whole, is one of rebuke and repression. His design was, doubtless, to teach that there are higher considerations than those of flesh and blood, where the interests of God's kingdom are concerned ; and to render that lesson more impressive to us, He taught it first to her who, from her peculiar relation to Him, and from his having been a most

dutiful Son in all the common relations of life, might too readily be led to think that she might venture to lay the gentle stress of her urgency or her expectations upon Him in matters that affected the conduct of his mission to a lost world. Yet, while He would not permit even the mother that bore Him to lay her finger upon the ark of the covenant, He covered the harshness of his apparent refusal with the grace of a real concession to her wish.

He had said the time was not yet come ; and therefore He waited until the wine was wholly exhausted. Then, on looking round, He perceived six water-pots of stone, each capable of containing two or three firkins, set hard by for the purpose of those ablutions which the Jews of that age were so frequent and scrupulous in performing. These were now empty, probably from the ablutions of so many guests. These vessels our Lord directed to be filled with water ; and the servants, though wondering, did not venture to disobey Him, as his mother had hinted to them that they had better attend to any directions He might give. When this was done, He required them to draw it ; and then, as they perceived by the colour and odour that it HAD BECOME WINE, they scrupled not to bear it to the symposiarch, or ruler of the feast. This personage, being one of the guests whose function it was to preside at the table for the purpose of maintaining order, of enlivening the festivities, and of relieving the bridegroom from minute solitudes, counted it among his duties to taste, for approval, any fresh lot of wine that might be produced for the use of the guests. Tasting *this* wine, he, not knowing whence it came, but finding it greatly superior to any that had yet been used, called out to the bridegroom, in a tone of jocund raillery, across the table, ' Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine ; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : but *thou* hast kept the good wine until now.'

These words render the evidence of the miracle complete. First, the vessels used were such as were standing by for ordinary purposes, precluding any idea of collusion ; then they were not wine-vessels but water-pots, so that it could not be sug-

gested that there was some sediment of wine remaining in them, which gave a flavour to the water poured in, forming a kind of thin wine, or tolerable negus, which might pass at the end of the feast ; then there is the intervention of the servants in filling the vessels, but for which it might have appeared, as it did in fact appear to the ruler of the feast, that the wine had come from some unexpected quarter ; lastly, there is the evidence of the symposiarch, who, knowing nothing of the history of this wine, pronounces upon it that it is not only real wine, but good wine—better than has yet been produced at the feast. Nothing can be more complete ; and, for convincing evidence in demonstration of miracles, there could scarcely be a better case than this. The keenest eye can discover no flaw in it.

### *Thirty-third Week—Fifth Day.*

THE TRADERS DRIVEN FROM THE TEMPLE.—JOHN II. 13—22.

JOHN is the only one of the evangelists who relates this miracle at Cana of Galilee ; and he goes on to state, that ‘ after this Jesus went down to Capernaum, He, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples ;’ that is to say, all the party connected with Him, by natural or religious ties, which had been present at Cana. Of Capernaum we may find another occasion to speak ; and it will at present suffice to state, that it seems to have stood on the north-west shore of the lake of Tiberias, about twenty-five miles north-west from Cana. This place afterwards became our Lord’s usual residence, so far as He can be said to have had any fixed abode ; but his stay there was, on the present occasion, very short, owing to the approach of the Passover, which He purposed to attend. The reason of his going so much out of his direct way for so short a visit is not easily seen, unless He had already made this place his home, or unless we suppose that some of his disciples residing in this quarter had returned to their homes, while He and the others had proceeded to Cana, and that He had appointed

them to join Him here, before going together to Jerusalem. That the mother and brethren of Jesus went thither also, instead of going back to Nazareth (which, however, they may have all done intermediately), suggests that they meant to attend the Passover, and wished to do so in his company, not only because this had been their practice in former years, but because they might desire to observe his proceedings, now that He had manifestly reached the turning-point in a career which had so long been a mysterious expectation to them.

The visit to Jerusalem at *this* Passover is not recorded by any other evangelist than John ; and it is remarkable that the memorable incident which *he* connects with it is the same which the other evangelists assign to the *last* Passover our Lord attended. This incident was his driving the traders out of the temple. We have therefore to suppose that He did this on the two different occasions. Nor is there any difficulty in such a supposition ; for as we find Him repeating, at different times, and to different audiences, the same sayings and discourses, there is no reason why the same significant and symbolically instructive action should not be done again at a distant interval of time—the repetition giving intensity to the meaning. If, however, the incident happened only once (and no *one* of the Gospels records it twice), we must assume that either John or the other evangelists relate it out of the chronological order. This is more possible of the others than of John, whose narrative is all of a piece ; and, therefore, if we had to choose, we should prefer to ascribe it to the first Passover, as he does. But we see in the repetition of the act no difficulty comparable to that which would arise from supposing that some of the evangelists ascribed to one Passover what belonged to another ; and that some of the other evangelists record this as having *also* happened at the last Passover, is sufficiently explained by the fact that the visit to Jerusalem at this Passover is entered in their records.

During the feast at Jerusalem, and in presence of the multitudes there assembled from all quarters, Jesus openly stood forth, in the exercise of his high ministry, and attested his

mission by various miracles. These are not particularly recorded, but were doubtless of the same character as those which we afterwards find Him performing—healing sundry kinds of diseases by his mere word. He had, therefore, already acquired a general reputation in the city as a ‘teacher sent from God ;’ if not, as the more enlightened might conjecture, something more than that, when He cleared the temple of the traffickers who encumbered its sacred courts.

For the convenience of the Jews who repaired to Jerusalem from a distance, and wished to offer sacrifices, the usage had grown up of allowing booths to be set up and stalls kept in the temple courts, where everything requisite for the purpose might be had ; and as the half-shekel tribute to the temple, due from every adult male, and usually paid at this time, could only be received in Jewish money, the worshippers needed to exchange for it the Greek and Roman coins which were in general circulation, for which purpose the money-changers also were permitted to place their tables in the temple courts. These courts were thus made no bad emblem of the then existing state of the Hebrew theocracy ; for although the custom had, in its origin, the excuse of public convenience, and the traffic had at first been conducted with that subdued decorum which the sacred place exacted, yet, from the progressing corruptions of the people, many foul indecorums had crept in ; and the merchants and brokers, with the eager cupidity which had already become their characteristic, soon made everything subservient to their avarice ; and their noisy toutings and keen hucksterings not only defiled the sacred courts, but greatly disturbed those who came to worship at the temple.

Part of the ministry which Christ had undertaken, was to denounce the corruptions of the secularized theocracy, and to declare judgment against them ; and as the general desecration of all that was holy was aptly represented by these profane doings in the temple, He first of all manifested against them his holy anger. Threatening the traders with a scourge of small cords that He had provided, He drove them before Him out of the temple ; the tables of the more tardy money-changers

He overturned ; and to those that sold doves He said, ' Take these things hence : make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.'

Let it not be thought that it was the arm of a single man against many, or the dread of his whip of small cords, that caused the traffickers to withdraw in haste from the temple. It was the divine indignation that flashed from eyes usually so full of love and pity ; it was the strong language (of which there was more, probably, than is written) with which He denounced their wickedness ; it was the belief that He acted under a prophetic mission, and because they beheld in his uplifted scourge a symbol, after the manner of the old prophets, of judgments to come, which their consciences, smitten and roused by his acts and words, told them they had well deserved.

No miracle is claimed in all this. No miracle was needed. But let those who question the possibility of such a transaction, call to mind what is often seen in this country : a single officer of the law, strong only in the consciousness of right and duty, confronting and dispersing before him a mischievous or excited rabble, weak only in the consciousness of wrong-doing. But it may be said that *this* is a public officer ; whereas Jesus was only a private man in the view of these people. Not so. He was already regarded as a prophet, or one who claimed to be such. That character gave authority to his act in their eyes ; for they felt it was an act suited to that character, and such as might have been expected from some of the ancient prophets.

The priests, who felt bound to take notice of a transaction so directly involved in their jurisdiction, and whose profits from allowing the traders to establish themselves in the temple courts interested them in the maintenance of the existing usage,—even they, when they came to question Jesus, did not deny his authority to act as He had done, in case He were a prophet ; but they required Him to give more distinct proof than He had hitherto afforded of the prophetic mission, which could alone justify Him in taking such authority upon Him.

His answer to this demand was at once a reproof and a prophecy : ' Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise

it up.' He meant, as St. John assures us, 'the temple of his body;' and spoke prophetically of his resurrection from the dead, which would be a proof of a divine mission, such as no saint or prophet ever gave. He doubtless laid his hand upon his breast as He spoke. The body, in which the Godhead visibly dwelt, was a temple holier than that at Jerusalem. This temple they would destroy, and lay in the dust; yet in three days would He himself, by his own power, raise it up, in all, or more than all, its former strength and beauty. It was a glorious parable, which it is not surprising that they did not comprehend; for John himself confesses that even the disciples did not understand it till *after* the resurrection, which is indeed true of many other things that they had heard their Lord utter.

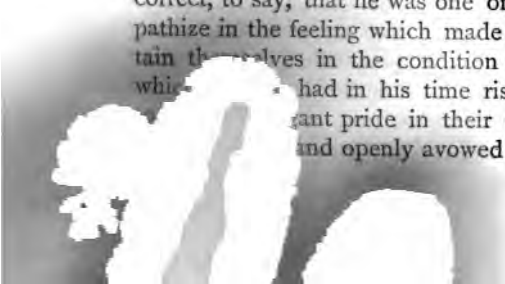
### *Thirty-third Week—Sixth Day.*

HEROD'S TEMPLE.—JOHN II. 20.

THE declaration of the Jews, 'Forty and six years was this temple in building,' may seem to need some explanation; for we all know that the second temple—that reared by the Jews after their return from the Exile—was completed in twenty-one years. Was, then, the temple which existed in our Lord's time a different structure? Essentially it was; although, from the manner of its construction, it was formally regarded as the second temple, or as representing it.

The sacred edifice in which our Lord taught was substantially the work of Herod the Great.

This Herod was a very lax Jew; in fact, he was more than half a heathen. Or it might be more precise, if not more correct, to say, that he was one of those who could not sympathize in the feeling which made the Jews desirous to maintain themselves in the condition of a separate people; and which had in his time risen, among the stricter sort, to a magnificent pride in their own privileged state, and a corresponding and openly avowed abhorrence and scorn of all



other nations. This fretted the mind of Herod, as it formed a stubborn barrier to many of his designs ; for he mingled freely with Greeks and Romans, liked their manners, admired their institutions, and even looked upon their idolatry without repugnance. Hence he desired to assimilate the habits and customs of his subjects to theirs ; and was continually irritated by the stubborn opposition he met with, and the odium which he knew that he had incurred on this as on other grounds.

Herod was a man of magnificent tastes, and had a passion for building. - Some towns were founded by him, and others restored or improved on a scale of great splendour. He enriched Jerusalem and other towns with fine structures ; he built palaces, he erected towers, he constructed moles on the coast, he established strong fortresses. All this afforded no ground of offence ; but, to the horror of the people, he did not hesitate to build temples for idolatrous worship in places where the inhabitants were principally, or in a large measure, heathens. Scarcely less odious to them, and more effectively resisted, was his attempt to introduce into their cities the savage games of the amphitheatre, which were congenial to his own hard and cruel temper, but which were to his people most hateful, on both religious and social grounds ; and although he did build some amphitheatres, he could not bring the people in properly Jewish cities, least of all in Jerusalem, to tolerate the use of them.

Becoming at last sensible of the dislike which such proceedings, added to the severities of his government, had engendered against him in the minds of the people, he sought for measures which might conciliate them ; and he found one measure, calculated not only to have this effect, but at the same time to gratify his own prevailing taste, and perpetuate, as he thought, the glory of his name as another Solomon ; and it must be admitted that in many points his character did resemble that of Solomon—wisdom not included.

His purpose was to rebuild the temple on a scale of magnificence, rivalling, if not eclipsing, the temple of Solomon itself. The sacred edifice had fallen into sad decay, not only from the



ravages of time, but from what it had suffered from the hands of enemies; for that part of Jerusalem, being by far the strongest, had been the last resort of the inhabitants in times of peril, and therefore the spot against which the most exasperated assaults had been directed.

The Jews, however, though charmed by the prospect which the king held out, and aware that the project was one which he, if only from mere pride, would be likely to carry into effect, were afraid to trust him implicitly, and they were not without apprehensions that, after having deprived them of what they already had, he might withhold what he had led them to expect. It was all peace and prosperity now; but troubles might arise, the inevitable expenses of which might render Herod, lavish as he was, and possibly all the more for his being lavish, unwilling or unable to accomplish what he had undertaken. To meet this apprehension, Herod, who for the various reasons at which we have hinted, was really solicitous in this matter, undertook that he would not disturb the old building until he had made every preparation for the new. This preparation took two full years. Josephus declares that a thousand waggons were employed during that time in conveying the stones and timber, that ten thousand artificers fitted all things for the building, and that one thousand priests, who were skilled in architecture, oversaw and directed the works. This last is a very remarkable fact, illustrative and confirmatory of the general impression, that the great Levitical body employed their abundant leisure largely in the cultivation of the higher branches of learning, science and art, law, medicine, architecture; so that they were, in fact, the professionally learned body of the nation. And, indeed, they were so numerous a body, as to be well able to supply from themselves the members of all the professions which we call learned. After two years had thus been spent in preparation, the old temple was taken down—not all at once, as some state, but by degrees, as fast as the parts removed could be replaced by the new building—in the twenty-first year of his own reign, seventeen years before Christ, and therefore just forty-six before the

first Passover of our Lord's ministry. It is true that the main body of the temple was finished, so as to be fit for divine service, in nine years and a half; yet a great number of workmen were still employed in carrying on the out-buildings during all the time of our Saviour's abode on earth, and even for some years after his death. In fact, the operations were continued until seven years before the temple was finally destroyed by the Romans, that is, in the year 64, when 18,000 men being thrown out of employment, the local rulers, compassionating their destitute condition, and dreading the consequences of so large a body of men being at once thrown loose upon society, devised a plan for employing them in rebuilding the eastern cloisters, full wages being given them for merely nominal work. But this was put a stop to by king Agrippa, who, however, sanctioned the employment of these men in paving the streets of the city with white stone.

This temple, which, as the frequent place of our Lord's ministry, is more interesting to us than even that of Solomon, was considerably larger than the temple built by the restored captives, as that had been larger than the first temple. The second temple (properly so called) was seventy cubits long, sixty cubits broad, and sixty high; but this was one hundred cubits long, seventy broad, and one hundred high. The second temple seems also not to have had the porch any higher than the rest of the building; for Herod, in his proposal to the Jews, appeals to their knowledge of the fact that it wanted sixty cubits of the height of the first temple. But in the third the porch was raised to 120 cubits, as at the first; and, by extending it fifteen cubits beyond each side of the body of the temple, he made the front to be a hundred cubits wide; for twice fifteen added to seventy, which was the breadth of the temple itself, make a hundred. The ground-plan therefore resembled the letter T; the top representing the front of the porch, and the body of the letter the holy and the most holy places.

All the Jewish writers extol this temple exceedingly, both for the beauty of the workmanship and the costliness of the

materials ; for it was built of white marble, beautifully variegated, and with stones of large dimensions, some of them being not less than twenty-five cubits long, eight cubits high, and twelve cubits thick—explaining the admiration with which, on one occasion, our Lord's disciples called his attention to the great and goodly stones of the temple. We cannot here enter further into details ; but the impression left upon our mind is, that Herod's temple was, considered architecturally, a more elaborate and magnificent work than that of Solomon, though much less lavishly adorned with the precious metals. The taste for that species of ornamentation had passed by ; and it is very obvious that, in building, fine marble makes a more agreeable impression, better satisfies a correct taste, and is really more magnificent, than any amount of silver or gold.

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The temple of Herod is minutely described by the Jewish historian Josephus. In the New Testament, all the references to it are incidental. The temple itself is carefully distinguished by the sacred writers from the courts which surrounded it, and which formed a part of the great structure. The former is always designated '*the fane*' (*ναός*), as in Matt. xxi. 35, 'Whom ye slew between the *temple* (*fane*) and the altar.' The great altar stood in front of the porch of the fane. The whole building, on the other hand, was called *Hieron* (*ιερόν*), 'the consecrated place.' Unfortunately, this distinction, though always observed in the Greek, is not kept up in the English version ; though, if it were kept up, it would tend to prevent much confusion and misapprehension.

The size and form of the fane have been stated by Dr. Kitto. In front of it was a small open court, containing the altar of burnt-offerings, into which the priests alone were permitted to enter. Around the fane and the court of burnt-offerings extended another and larger court, enclosed by ornamented walls. It was called 'the second or inner court,' and could only be entered by Jews who were ceremonially clean. A portion of it, on the east side, was set apart for women. Without this, again, and extending round it, was the great court of the Gentiles, which formed a public promenade for Jews, and also for such strangers as visited the city. It was surrounded by cloisters, supported on ranges of Corinthian columns : one of the cloisters is called in the New

Testament 'Solomon's Porch.' This outer court was the scene of our Lord's teachings ; from it He drove those who were making it not only a place of merchandise, but a place of extortion and fraud. In it the disciples met daily after the ascension (Acts ii. 46) ; in it they subsequently preached the gospel (Acts v. 21, 42).

### Thirty-third Week—Seventh Day.

#### NICODEMUS.—JOHN III.

THE new and startling style of our Lord's discourse during his first ministerial visit to Jerusalem, the miracles which He wrought, and the remarkable public act and assumption of high authority which have lately engaged our attention, made a strong impression upon some minds, and drew many people to Him. The Pharisees indeed eyed Him with suspicion, and doubted the tendency of his teaching and proceedings ; but as He had not declared himself against the cloud of traditions in which they had enveloped and obscured the Judaism taught by Moses and enforced by the prophets, but had only denounced abuses which they could not but acknowledge, and were unable to vindicate, they dared not yet openly oppose Him. It would also be unjust, even to the Pharisees, to suppose that all were hypocrites, all governed by selfish motives. There were doubtless, among that powerful body, many whose piety was sincere, however debased and darkened by the errors of a corrupt system ; and such persons could not fail to receive some awakening impressions from the words and acts of Jesus.

Such a Pharisee was Nicodemus, described as 'a ruler of the Jews ;' by which we are to understand not a civil magistrate, as the civil government was at this time in the hands of the Romans, but an ecclesiastical ruler. In other words, he was a member of the Sanhedrim—a council of seventy members, consisting of distinguished priests, Levites, doctors, or wise men, and elders of the people. To be a member of this dignified assembly was a high distinction ; and hence Nicodemus

was a person of consequence, whom our Lord himself styles 'a master of Israel.'

The Jewish writers make frequent mention of one Nicodemus the son of Gorion, who lived in this age, and was a member of the council; and some have thought this the same with our Nicodemus. The concurrence of name, time, and condition, is favourable to this conclusion. Nicodemus was renowned for his wealth; and that he was rich, is shown by the liberal provision of costly spices which he made for our Lord's burial. In fact, of Nicodemus it is said that he was one of the three richest men in Jerusalem: so wealthy that he might have maintained a city at his own charge for ten years; and was able to give his daughter a dowry of a million golden denarii. But he was afterwards reduced to a very low estate, and his daughter had to beg her bread; which, if he was the same with the present Nicodemus, would be sufficiently explained by the persecutions likely to befall so noted a person, when he at length openly avowed himself an adherent of Jesus. The name 'Nicodemus' is Greek; and it was the custom of this age to have two names, one Greek or Latin, and the other native. It is said that the native name of Nicodemus was Bonai, and it is on record that one Bonai became a disciple of Jesus. All these, at least, are curious coincidences. But we do not press them, and the reader must take them for what it may seem to him they are worth.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. It is generally supposed that he chose this season because he was unwilling, without further inquiry, to commit himself, and increase the suspicions of the jealous body to which he belonged, by going in the day-time. This is not, however, certain; for it is recorded just before—(John ii. 24, 25)—that Jesus kept himself aloof from personal intercourse with those whom his miracles had impressed, so that there might be no opportunity of gaining his attention but by visiting Him at night; and if this was the night of the same day in which Nicodemus had seen our Lord's miracles, he could not well have had an earlier opportunity; and the intimation may thus be designed to express his im-

patient alacrity rather than his caution. To which it may be added, that it was very common with the Jewish doctors to meet together for conversation and the study of the law at night, and that to do this was considered highly commendable and meritorious. The existence of such a custom shows, at least, that the procedure of this 'master of Israel' was not in any way extraordinary.

Having witnessed the miracles our Lord had wrought, Nicodemus had reached the conviction that He was invested with a divine calling; but it does not appear that he had attained any clear views of Christ's person or mission; and his desire to possess more distinct information, must have been the greater from the expectations in regard to the approaching reign of the Messiah, which the ministrations of John had generally awakened. Nicodemus probably shared the general notion of the temporal character of that reign, though he may, at the same time, have had some more worthy and spiritual ideas concerning it. It does not seem that he had any conception that Jesus himself was the Messiah; but beholding Him as a divinely commissioned prophet, he repaired to Him for more definite information than he had yet been able to obtain on that great and interesting subject. As a pious Jew and rigid Pharisee, he had no doubt of his share in the Messiah's kingdom; but he was most anxious to learn when and how it would be manifested. How great then was his astonishment to hear that—son of Abraham as he was—Jew as he was—Pharisee as he was—something more was needed before he or any one else could become a fit subject of the kingdom which the Messiah came to establish, or entitled to a share in its benefits; and that the exaltation of the Messiah was to be of a kind far different from what he had thought—a lifting up (upon the cross) in suffering and death, that, as was well represented when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, whosoever looked believingly at Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!

The conversation with Nicodemus is one of the most memorable pages in the gospel, and differs in an essential particular

from the other teachings of Christ. In addressing a well-instructed man—a doctor of the law—Jesus uses language conformable to the state of mind and knowledge of his new disciple ; and it is difficult to seize the prevailing idea without some knowledge of the principles and prejudices of the Jewish theology of that age. The Jews believed that a heathen who became a proselyte passed through a new birth, and, by being thus new-born, cast into oblivion his antecedent connections and relatives in life, and this so literally and effectively, that he might espouse his own mother or sister without offence. The idea and name of a new birth were, therefore, familiar to the Jews ; but under a gross and literal apprehension, which was at one time in danger of creeping into the Christian church, and which Paul so forcibly condemns in the Epistles to the Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> The astonishment which Nicodemus expressed, was therefore not at the idea of a new birth in itself, but at the notion that he, as a Jew, should need any such transition in becoming a disciple of Christ. This was so strange and incredible, that he thought he must have misunderstood what had been said, and rather fell back upon the absurdity of a natural regeneration, facilitated perhaps more to him than to us, by the general belief in a sort of transmigration of souls. Hence his questions : ‘ How can a man be born when he is old ? ’—‘ How can these things be ? ’ In answer to which, Jesus, in words full of divine power, disclosed to him the spiritual nature of the kingdom He designed to establish, the essential regenerating change which must pass over those who become the subjects of that kingdom ; and, in conclusion, He declared with emphasis the real end and purpose of his coming, and even went so far as to indicate the very form of that death which He was to suffer for man’s sake. There were designedly many things in this that Nicodemus could not thoroughly understand till a future day ; but he pondered them well, and when that day came, he remembered and understood them.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 1 ; 2 Cor. ii.

## Thirty-fourth Week—First Day.

JESUS AND THE BAPTIST.—JOHN III. 22-36.

WHEN our Lord withdrew from Jerusalem He did not hasten back into Galilee, but remained in Judea, and at length proceeded to the Jordan, where He began to baptize. This seemed, to common apprehension, to bring Him into direct rivalry with John, who was then actually baptizing at another station on the river, higher up, at Ænon, near to Salim. John's disciples, jealous for their master's credit, hastened to tell him of this ; and the terms in which they did so, intimate that the baptism of John had become comparatively forsaken for that of Jesus. They said : ' He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, *and all men come to Him.*' They spoke not only as being jealous for their master, but as feeling their own consequence, as his adherents, affected by the higher popularity which the new teacher had already acquired. The principle on which all this is founded, lies deep in human nature. Jealousy of a rival's fame and success is constantly seen in the world, through every path of life, and not only inflicts great anguish upon the proud fleshly mind, but has often led to deeds of blackness and dishonour. The religion of Jesus enjoined the entire prostration of this common feeling ; and the man whose mind is thoroughly saturated with its holy influences, will be content, while he knows that his record is on high, and that his Lord's honour and the good of souls have been his only aims, to lie humbly in the dust, neglected and forgotten of men ; and not only to regard without repining or dislike those who have outstript him or outshone him in his own paths of honour and usefulness, but to rejoice in their success, and to cheer on with sympathiz-



ing shouts those who have taken from his own hands the sword of warfare and the palm of triumph.

John was not a Christian. But no one, however fully instructed in the things of Christ, did ever more strongly or loyally evince this self-abnegation in a matter where the pride of man is most quick and tender. It is quite refreshing to contrast his tone with that of his disciples. The manner in which they speak of Jesus is manifestly bitter, if not contemptuous, as if He was labouring to supplant in the public favour the man who had introduced Him to it, and as if He had been but too successful in his art.

Nothing ever uttered by man, under any like circumstances, can be finer than was John's answer, which, without a word of direct reproof, must in its effect, and by its contrast, have been felt as a severe rebuke by the complaining disciples. He called to their minds that he had always declared that he was not the Christ, but was sent before Him to prepare the way for Him. He beautifully compared himself to the paranymp, or friend of the bridegroom, who, although he had not himself the bride, stood by rejoicing greatly in the happiness of his friend. 'This *my* joy,' he said,—'this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled.' And then he added, with a cheerful satisfaction which reaches to the sublime of moral grandeur, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

See here how freely he admits and acquiesces in the fact of his own decline; and consider how unwilling men are to admit any idea of the kind, and how earnestly they repel it as the suggestion of malice or ignorance, when hinted by others. Many, rather than endure the idea of such degradation, will welcome death if it saves them from public neglect. But John admits the idea frankly, and with a clear perception of all that it involved. It involved the decline of his fame. To some minds popularity is the most gratifying of all attainments, and John had gained it in a high degree. He had seen multitudes flocking to him from all quarters; he had received a dignified deputation from the great ecclesiastical council of the nation to ask if he was the Messiah. But few were now to approach

him ; and the very qualities which had no doubt aided in establishing his reputation, now furnished ground for calumny ; for we learn from the subsequent testimony of our Saviour that men said of John, 'he hath a devil,' seeing that he came 'neither eating nor drinking,' nor taking part in the social gladnesses of common life. This change, which the most patient of men regarded as the bitterest drop in the cup he had to drink, was viewed by John with a cheerful and steady countenance. It in no wise moved him. That 'He must increase,' was to him an abundant satisfaction and compensation for 'I must decrease.' It was what he desired ; he would not, if he could, have had it otherwise. And this, be it remembered, came upon him, not at a time when age was unfitting him for the exertions, and enfeebling the powers, which had once produced so great an excitement ; but when every faculty was in its prime, and when he was more than ever worthy of the public esteem.

John had further in view the remediless decline not only of his popularity but of his influence. This had once been most extensive and salutary. His earnest voice had awed multitudes into seriousness, and had brought the most audacious sinners to his feet, crying, 'What shall we do?' Even the profligate tetrarch of Galilee heard him gladly, and did many things in compliance with his calls. But this popularity was in a great measure to pass away. Few came to listen to him ; and of the obduracy and indifference of many who had once seemed impressed by his teaching, there were not a few painful indications. This might naturally excite an unpleasant feeling for the moment even in his mind ; but all was speedily swallowed up in the overpowering thought, 'He must increase'—must establish an influence boundlessly more effectual and permanent than his ; an influence to which the fiercest prejudices, and even hearts of stone, must yield, and which would in due time be felt 'from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.'

John may also be regarded not only as speaking in view of this loss of fame and influence, but as contemplating the actual close of his ministry, and perhaps of his life. The purposes

for which he had been raised up had been accomplished ; and feeling that his task was done, he might have felt or known that he must soon go hence. No intimation had been given of any other service for him than that to which his views had even from his earliest years been directed, and he expected no other. But all this, though in the prime and vigour of his days, he contemplated without a sigh, not because he was weary of life and of life's labours, or because the world seemed to have lost all interest in him ; but because he knew that his place would be supplied by the One greater than himself, to whom the Spirit had not been given as to himself 'by measure ;' who was not, like himself, 'of the earth,' and therefore 'earthy,' but One who was 'from above,' and therefore 'above all.'

This willing renunciation, for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, of all that the worldly mind holds dear ; this readiness to render honour to whom honour was due, even though he thereby became nothing, is an eternal renown to the memory and name of John, and a glorious example to all 'the children of the kingdom.'

'He saw Jesus able to loose every seal, to unfold every mystery, to detect every snare, to brighten every darkness, to guide into all truth, and to form to all goodness ; and in no hands could he leave the concerns of religion, and the spiritual interests of those to whom he had ministered, but in those of Christ. In the splendour of his grace and truth, John was happy to be darkened, and in such fame he was content to be forgotten. Had his honours been ten thousand times brighter than they were, he could have laid them all at Christ's feet. John in his ministry was not like the evening star, sinking into the darkness of night, but like the morning star, lost to our view in the brightness of day. And he chose wisely for himself ; for thus retiring, he has secured a fame brighter than the applause of the multitude could have given, and he is now in possession of an honour which can never diminish.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BELFRAGE'S *Portrait of John the Baptist*. Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1836. A work in which the view embodied in this evening's reading is more fully and very eloquently wrought out.

**Thirty-fourth Week—Second Day.**

HEROD AND HERODIAS.

MATTHEW XIV. 1-4 ; MARK I. 14, VI. 17-20.

A FEW months after the circumstances which engaged our attention last evening, John the Baptist was cast into prison by Herod the tetrarch, or, as he was commonly called, 'the king' of Galilee.

This is the same Herod who had succeeded to the tetrarchy after the death of Herod the Great, and who therefore had, during nearly the whole of our Lord's lifetime, been prince of the country to which he belonged. This Herod, surnamed Antipas, inherited the vices but not the talents of his father, though he manifested considerable address in preventing and suppressing popular commotions in his dominions.

Herod had long been married to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia—that is, of the Arabian district bordering on Syria, and lying beyond Herod's own territories east of the Jordan ; for his tetrarchy comprehended Perea as well as Galilee. But on a journey which Herod took to Rome to pay his court to the emperor, he visited Herod Philip, his brother by the father's side, who was married to Herodias, the sister of both by the father's side. These three persons, then, stood in this relation to each other—that they were all children of the same father by different mothers. Herodias, though past her youth, was a very charming, but unscrupulous and ambitious woman. Herod was smitten with her beauty and winning manners, and availed himself of the freedom of access which his near relationship afforded, to endeavour to alienate her from her husband, and to gain her for himself. He was probably met half-way, for Herodias was weary of the comparatively obscure and private life she led with her husband, and longed to move in the greatly superior sphere to which Herod could raise her. It was agreed then between them that he

should make her his wife when he returned from Rome. It is true, they were both already married ; but this was no insuperable obstacle to persons who, like most of the Herodian family, were accustomed to make all considerations of right or propriety bend to their own inclinations. It was therefore agreed that Herod should divorce his wife. This he might do without any material public scandal, as the practice of divorcing a wife for any cause, or without any cause, had become very common in that age, and as such was strongly rebuked by our Saviour. Herodias also agreed to divorce her husband. This *was* a public scandal ; being wholly alien to the ideas and habits of the Jews, especially as the existing marriage had not been fruitless. The highest classes had, however, borrowed the practice from the Romans, with whom they had much intercourse ; but their example could never reconcile the public mind to it.

Before Herod returned, this conspiracy against her happiness came to the ears of his wife, who immediately fled to her father. This step was probably not unpleasant to Herod, who, on his return, made Herodias his wife.

The proceeding was, however, altogether abhorrent to public opinion, which even Herodian tyrants do not deem it safe to disregard. Herod therefore felt uneasy, and sent for John the Baptist, in the expectation that if he could obtain his sanction for what had been done, the people, who, as the king knew, held the prophet in great respect, would be satisfied. But if Herod hoped to win or overawe John into a favourable opinion of his conduct, he was grievously mistaken. He had to do with one who feared not the face of man, and whom kings were powerless to turn one hair's breadth from the line of truth and duty. He said plainly, 'It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife ;' and for that saying he was cast into prison.

Herod himself, perhaps, who had as much respect for John as so bad a man could have, might have passed it over. But Herodias, who was in the highest degree exasperated at this adverse declaration from one whose word had so much weight with the people, craved his destruction ; and her influence was

at this time so powerful with her companion in guilt, that she would probably have prevailed upon him to slay the prophet, but for the salutary fear which he entertained of the effect which a deed so atrocious might produce among the people. He did, however, cast him into prison ; and there he remained until the watchful vengeance of Herodias succeeded in accomplishing his destruction.

Every one, in perusing this narrative, feels that he understands why it was not lawful for Herod to have Herodias. Yet the question has been raised, on what ground John declared the marriage to be unlawful. This, however, it does not seem difficult to find. We must understand that 'unlawful' means contrary to the letter or spirit of the law of Moses ; and certainly the connection involved more than one transgression of that law.

In the first place, it was unlawful for a man to marry one who was his sister even by one parent only. This, indeed, equally applies to the first marriage ; but that did not make the analogous second marriage more lawful. Then the divorce of her husband by Herodias was unlawful, and therefore void ; and such being the case, the marriage contracted immediately after, while the husband still lived, was void, and Herod and Herodias were living together in a state of adultery. Had Herodias not been the sister of Herod, had her husband been dead, and had there been no issue by that marriage, it might not only have been lawful for Herod, but obligatory on him, to marry Herodias. For the law required that when a man died childless, his brother should take his widow, in order that the first-born child of this union might be counted as the child and heir of the deceased brother. But none of these conditions existed here. Herodias was the sister of Herod, and that by the father's side, which was held to constitute a nearer relationship than by the mother's side only ; her husband was living, and there had been issue by the marriage, in the person of that damsel whose dancing subsequently cost John the Baptist his head. If Philip had been dead, and if he had died childless (which would have created an obligation upon Herod

in any other case), it would still have been 'unlawful' for Herod to take Herodias, because she was his sister.

It therefore seems to us that the reasons why it was not lawful for Herod to have Herodias are, that she was his sister, and that she was the wife of a man still living, and this man his own brother, a circumstance which, however it may have affected the legal bearings of the question, was certainly a strong aggravation of the moral enormity of the transaction. The Jewish writers who speak of this marriage, always do so with reprehension, making the culpability rest either upon the fact that Herodias was his own sister, or upon that of her being the wife of Herod's still living brother; and Josephus seems to include the woman's divorce of her husband along with this, when he describes the whole transaction as 'confounding the laws of the country,'—a strong expression on his part of its unlawfulness. The crime was twofold—that of adultery and incest—and therefore doubly 'unlawful.'

We shall ere long have to witness the result.

### *Thirty-fourth Week—Third Day.*

#### THE SAMARITANS.—JOHN IV. 4.

AFTER an absence in Judea of about eight months, Jesus set out on his return to Galilee. This must have been in the month of November, or early in December. Various reasons have been assigned for this journey. Some conjecture that it was from having heard of John's imprisonment; but it does not appear that there could be anything in this to affect his proceedings, seeing for what special cause John was cast into prison; and the prudence which some find in this step, would have dictated another course rather than a journey into the very heart of Herod's territories. Others more reasonably suppose that the Pharisees had become decidedly hostile to Jesus, when they found that his preaching was attracting even more attention than that of John; and that He now began to

speaking with severity of the hypocrisies and solemn impositions of which they were in that age the chief upholders; so that He resolved to retire from that quarter of the country, and proceed to Galilee, which not only offered Him a safe abode, as the Pharisees were not numerous there, but presented a fair field for his labours.

There may be something in this conjecture. But it seems to us that a sufficient explanation may be found in the approach of winter, unfavourable to the open-air gatherings in town and country, to which He had hitherto ministered. This would naturally induce Him to return to what had previously been his usual abode. Indeed, we commonly find Him in the winter in Galilee, chiefly at Capernaum, where He had a fixed residence, probably a hired house.

There were three routes in use for this journey. One was by crossing the Jordan near Jericho, travelling northward through the eastern region (Perea), and recrossing the river into Galilee a little below the lake of Tiberias. Another route was along the sea-coast, and through the plain of Esdraelon. The shortest and most direct route was by way of Shechem, through the country of the Samaritans, which was interposed between Judea and Galilee. Very rigid Jews, especially those of the sect of the Pharisees, shunned this road from their abhorrence of the Samaritans; from the fear of pollution by intercourse with a people whom they accounted as even viler than the heathen; and in order to avoid the insults and inconveniences with which the Samaritans retaliated the contempt of their Jewish neighbours. Jesus, however, made choice of this route. Being the nearest, He would not be likely to avoid it for any of the reasons stated; and opportunity could not fail to offer, as He passed, to sow the good seed among a people in many respects better prepared to receive Him than were the mass of the Jews themselves; because, while they, equally with the Jews, expected the speedy advent of the Messiah, their notions of his reign were less perverted by political ideas. But we shall not understand the nature of our Lord's intercourse with the Samaritans in this



journey, unless we pay some attention to their condition and opinions.

This people derived their name from the region they occupied—the region of which Samaria had been the metropolis. Their chief seat in that district was not, however, Samaria, but Shechem (in our Lord's time called Sychar), in the beautiful valley between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. Originally they were foreigners from beyond the Euphrates, settled here by the kings of Assyria, in order to keep the country from utter desolation, after these had destroyed the kingdom of Israel and sent the ten tribes into captivity. They were of course idolaters; but finding that the beasts of prey increased rapidly in a country now so depopulated, they ascribed this calamity to the wrath of the gods of the country for neglected rites; and they petitioned the imperial court to send them an Israelitish priest, who might teach them how to worship these gods, so as to avert their anger. Having obtained what they sought, they soon made up a curious religion of their own, combining the worship of their native idols with the worship of Jehovah. The idolatrous taint, however, became gradually diluted, and eventually disappeared; and, in fact, the Samaritans professed, at the time when our Lord appeared, a more primitive and better form of Judaism than generally prevailed among the Jews themselves. The reason of this was, that they retained the Judaism which they had been taught in a comparatively early age, and adhered with scrupulous exactness to the simple sense of the law of Moses; while among the Jews the plain letter of the law had become encumbered, and indeed overlaid, by a dense heap of traditional interpretations and applications, which were held to be of equal authority with the law itself, and which, in the time of our Saviour, constituted, as He himself declares, a burden too heavy to be borne. From all this the Judaism of the Samaritans was free; they rejected, or rather ignored, these traditions; and the dislike and contempt of the Jews towards them were in no small degree enhanced by their want of, and disregard for, the learned rubbish which, as the Pharisees taught, constituted the perfection of the law. It was no doubt

the slighting language in which our Lord spoke of these traditions, that gave point to the vituperation on one occasion used against Him: 'Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil;' which was intended to be the severest, the most contemptuous, the most venomous thing that could possibly be said.

The root of the intense hatred between the two nations lay in the contempt which the Jews, in the pride of their pure Abrahamic descent, showered upon the Samaritans as an inferior and ignoble people; in the earnestness with which they withstood the attempt at amalgamation originally made by the Samaritans; and in the vehemence with which they refused to admit them to community of worship and religious privileges.

As the Samaritans became more Jewish, they began to be ashamed of that foreign and heathen origin which the Jews never forgot, and never failed to cast in their teeth; and in process of time they advanced a claim to be regarded as of Abrahamic origin. This claim was derided by the Jews; but there was nevertheless some foundation for it. They had largely intermarried with the Hebrews—at first with the thin and scattered remnants of the ten tribes that remained in the land of Israel; then with the like remnant of the kingdom of Judah; and more recently with the captives who returned from Babylon. This, in process of time, threw a strong infusion of Jewish blood into the Samaritan body; and, in the admixture, there is reason to suppose that the Jewish predominated over the foreign element. Such intermarriages had, however, long since ceased, and now nothing could be more abhorrent to either Jew or Samaritan; for the latter, repelled at every point by the Jews, learned to repay their dislike in full measure. It is not less true that hate engenders hate, than that love begets love.

Repelled with vehemence from any participation in the rebuilding of the temple after the Captivity, and refused an equal right or interest in the services there celebrated, they at length determined to have a sacerdotal establishment of their own. They erected a temple upon Mount Gerizim—the mountain from which the blessings of the law were delivered, when the

Israelites first entered the Promised Land, and whereon Moses had set up an altar. From this they were led to deny that Jerusalem was the proper site of the temple, and to assert that Mount Gerizim, having thus been indicated by the great law-giver himself, was the place where men ought to worship. This, as much as any other point of difference, if not more than any other, was a source of keen and bitter antagonism between them; and Jews, passing through the country at the great festivals, avowedly to worship at Jerusalem, were subject to so much annoyance and insult from the Samaritans, that such as could well do it, journeyed by one of the more circuitous routes which have been indicated. Save on festival occasions, travelling through Samaria, especially *from* Jerusalem, was not commonly subject to any other inconvenience than such as necessarily arose from the alienation and non-intercourse; for a Samaritan would not receive a Jew, nor a Jew receive a Samaritan into his house, or bid him God-speed. They might buy and sell with each other; but beyond the communication which mercantile transactions involved, all intercourse was on both sides considered unbecoming and improper.

It was a strange condition of affairs that the territory of a people, thus disliking and disliked, should occupy the very heart of the country, and be interposed between the two great territorial sections of the Jewish population. The distance, greater in reality than in mere length of road, thus intervening between the Jews of the south and north, probably contributed in no faint degree to the sort of alienation which existed between them also. For the Jews of the south, or of Judea, despised the inhabitants of Galilee only some degrees less than they despised the Samaritans.

### *Thirty-fourth Week—Fourth Day.*

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.—JOHN IV. 5-42.

WE know that Shechem, which had now become the chief city of the Samaritans, was a flourishing town so early as the time

of Jacob, who encamped for some time in the neighbourhood on his prosperous return from Padan-Aram. On the site of his encampment he left a well, which was thenceforth called 'Jacob's well,' but whether as having been digged by him for the service of his household, or from his using it, having purposely encamped where he found a well existing, is not quite certain. We apprehend the former to be the case. If a well already existed, he had no right to appropriate it; besides, it is somewhat too distant from the town to have been originally made for the use of the inhabitants, although, having been made, they eventually found it useful from its abundant supply of cool and excellent water. It is about a mile from Shechem; but the town may have been formerly nearer to the well than at present, or may have been, and probably was, more extensive. The well stands at the commencement of a round vale, supposed to be 'the parcel of ground' which Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver, and which he bequeathed to his son Joseph. There was formerly a church over the well (built by the empress Helena); but of this no trace, except of the foundations, now exists, and we only find over the mouth of the well a small arched or vaulted building. 'The well is deep,' being still, apart from deposits at the bottom, seventy-five feet in depth, with a diameter of nine feet; and whereas, in most other wells of this land, the water lies at the surface, in this, one must reach to a great depth to get at the water, from which cause it is unusually cool. It is not now used by the inhabitants of Shechem, but is generally visited by travellers; and there is no reason to entertain any doubt that it is the very well by which our Lord, 'being wearied with his journey,' rested about the middle of the second day, while the disciples were sent on to the town to purchase some victuals, probably bread and fruit. He could not have been so weary as to be unable to go with them to the city, if He had seen fit; but the relations which subsisted between Jews and Samaritans, precluding Him from access to any house there, rendered it better that such food as was needed should be brought where the well furnished water for their drink.

While our Lord tarried thus, seated beside the well, a woman of the neighbouring town came to draw water. As this was one of the wells too deep for the water to be easily reached, and no bucket was attached for general use, Jesus, although athirst, had not yet tasted of the water. He therefore asked the woman to let Him drink. Perceiving that He was a Jew, the woman, instead of hastening, like the Rebekahs and Rachels of old, to draw water for the stranger, expressed her astonishment at being asked a kindness by a Jew—not, perhaps, that she was indisposed to render it, but that she knew it was a principle among the stricter Jews, such as the Pharisees, that an Israelite ought not to borrow of a Samaritan, or accept any kindness from him, or eat of his bread or drink of his water, unpurchased. Embracing the occasion which this reply offered to plant in this poor woman's soul the seeds of divine truth, and, as was his custom, adapting his teaching to her condition and degree of culture, He used a natural and a very expressive image to awaken in her yet unspiritual mind an interest in divine things. 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee "Give me to drink," thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.' Living water—that is, water *flowing* from a perennial spring, as contrasted with dead or still water—was highly prized, not only from the supply being unfailing, but from its being regarded as the purest and most wholesome. It is, therefore, no wonder that this declaration arrested the woman's attention and gained her respect; and she stammered out a kind of apology for the little alacrity she had shown, and indeed still showed, in satisfying his simple request. 'Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.' What then? If He had possessed anything to draw with, He would not have needed to ask her for water. *She* had something to draw with, and why not use it for Him? There is much reason to suppose that the Jews and Samaritans naturally regarded as polluted and rendered unclean the vessels which each other had used. We still see this in the East, where the stricter Moslems, regarding a Christian as unclean, will not eat of his food, or drink from

his vessel ; and if they give him food or water, will feel bound to destroy, if of potter's work, or to subject to laborious purification, if of metal, wood, or leather, the vessels he has used. Nothing is more common than to see one who has given you drink, dash to pieces the vessel that has touched your lips ; and that, not with any intention of insult or offence, but as an inevitable necessity from its having been polluted. There was probably something of the kind in operation here ; and it may be that the woman's backwardness arose from her wish to preserve her pitcher.

She was, however, unwilling to drop the subject that so much interested her ; and, in answer to her inquiries, our Lord, in order to quicken her longings for this living water, before He opened to her his inner meaning, told her that whoever drank of that water which He had asked of her, would thirst again ; but that whoever drank that water which He could give, would thirst no more. Then the poor woman—no small part of whose daily labour had been to travel that dry and dusty road, heavily laden with her water vessel—cried out with rapturous eagerness, 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.' But having thus brought the woman of Samaria to a state of intense longing for that which He alone could give, He broke off the subject without any further explanation, and proceeded to lead her to look within. He told her to call her husband. She replied that she had none. He said, that was true ; for she had already had five husbands, and the man with whom at present she lived was not her husband. That she had had five husbands seems to imply that the same degrading facility of divorce existed among the Samaritans as among the Jews ; for it is more probable that she had been divorced by all or some of these five, than that they had all died.

Astonished at the knowledge which this Jewish stranger possessed of her secret history, the woman recognised Him as a prophet ; and, beholding Him in that character, was led to conceive that some deeper sense than she had yet apprehended lay in what He had before said to her ; and the advantage of

conversing with a prophet being so rare, she proceeded with some eagerness to question Him on those religious subjects which were of special interest to her people. The foremost subject, naturally, was the comparative claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim. This indeed might be obviously suggested by the fact, that Gerizim itself towered up close by the spot where they stood. So, said she, looking or pointing to it, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' Greatly must she have been surprised to hear this question treated with indifference by a Jew, who spoke of a time coming, yea, already come, when it should be of no consequence *where* men worshipped the Father, so that they worshipped Him 'in spirit and in truth.' But in regard to the real question the woman had in view, He decided in favour of the Jews. It is true that the Samaritans had a simple worship, and had not encumbered the law of Moses with useless traditions. But still they were inferior to the Jews in real religious knowledge, seeing that, by refusing to acknowledge the divine authority of the books of prophecy, and keeping themselves shut up in the older revelations to Moses as embodied in the Pentateuch, which formed all of Scripture that they received or acknowledged as divine, they had debarred themselves from the light, progressively waxing stronger, which the prophets had given. Here was their weakness, and Jesus assigns to the Jews the superiority, doubtless on the ground that they remained under the influence of a continuous and unbroken chain of revelation, leading on to the 'salvation' which the Messiah was to bring.

The woman so far understood this, as to see that He referred to the Messiah; and therefore, to express this intelligence of his meaning, as well as to waive a decision in which she cared not to acquiesce, but was unable to discuss, she expressed her persuasion that the Messiah was coming, and would set all things right when He came. How greatly was she astonished when, with quiet emphasis, He told her, 'I that speak unto thee am He!' She did not question this for an instant of one who had so manifestly seen into her whole course of life, whom

she had already recognised as a prophet, and whose weighty words returned with tenfold meaning to her mind after this declaration. She forthwith left the water-pot, about which she had before been so solicitous, and hurried back empty-handed to the city, to tell these glad tidings there. The news was received with no languid interest. Many hastened out to Jesus at the well, and besought Him to go into the city, and tarry for a while with them. To this earnest desire for instruction and enlightenment, our Lord responded by remaining there two days, after which He departed, leaving behind Him on many minds the conviction that led them to declare, 'This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

### *Thirty-fourth Week—Fifth Day.*

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.—JOHN IV. 43-54.

ON his return to Galilee, Jesus was well received by his countrymen. Many of them had been at Jerusalem at the Passover the previous spring, and having witnessed his doings and his sayings there, they were anxious to see how He would conduct himself, and what miracles He would perform, on his return. In fact, Jesus was already famous; and all his proceedings were watched with curiosity and interest. He did not at first, however, give any demonstrative exercise of the powers that rested in Him, but simply passed on, 'preaching the gospel of the kingdom.' What kind of preaching that was, Mark (i. 14, 15) informs us, giving its substance thus: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

Thus He proceeded, until He reached Cana of Galilee, which was the scene of his first recorded miracle, and was destined to be that of the second, of which a full account is given.

While He was here, a nobleman, belonging to the court of Herod Antipas, and whose residence was at Capernaum, having heard of, or witnessed, his miracles of healing at Jerusalem,



and being apprised of his arrival in Galilee, hastened to implore Him to come down and heal his son who was at the point of death. There is some doubt as to the precise meaning of the word translated 'nobleman,' and the question need not detain us. It is enough that the person was one in authority at court. Some have supposed it was Chusa, Herod's steward, whose wife was, at a later period, one of the holy women who ministered to the Lord of their substance. Luke viii. 3.

Our Lord's reply to this application seems less gracious than his usual answers to distressed suppliants, and bears an aspect of repulsion and rebuke: 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' There must have been a reason for this. We shall perceive very often that the answers of Jesus apply much less to the questions asked and petitions addressed to Him, than to the frame of mind, the disposition of heart, which his searching eye discovered in the querist or suppliant. It is hence that, on occasions which bear much resemblance to each other in externals, the answers are often materially different. There were miracle-seekers, who had no regard to the higher end for which Christ's mighty works were performed—that of producing faith in Him; but who rather wished to make this heavenly power subservient to their earthly ends, by gratifying either low desires or mere idle curiosity. Against such persons Jesus was always strict and stern, often repelling their solicitations unheard. There were also those who were drawn to the Redeemer by the craving sense of inward wants which He alone could satisfy, and who under that influence attached themselves strongly to Him. These He loved best, and met with divine tenderness and affection. Between these two, there was yet another class, who, though at first drawn to Him by their urgent external needs, after having obtained relief, often joined Him from feelings of love. The present nobleman belonged to this class. He is not disinclined to believe; but it is necessity alone, and not an inward impulse, which brings him to Christ.

Jesus—lately come from Samaria, where the people had been drawn to Him by the divine power of his words and his

appearance without any miracles—could not but contrast this with the insensibility to divine impressions among the Jews, whose faith, wrapped up as they were in formal Pharisaism, seemed continually to need the support and exciting stimulus of signs and wonders. Hence our Lord's answer, or rather remark, on this occasion, is expressed in the plural form, though suggested by the application of the nobleman alone.

This answer did not, however, amount to a refusal; and a father conflicting for a son's life is not easily repelled. So the nobleman pressed his supplication with still greater urgency of entreaty: 'Sir, come down ere my child die!' Who does not hear a groan and see a hot tear in every word of this? The man was a very anxiously loving father, but a very weak believer. He had not the least idea that Jesus could heal his son without going down to Capernaum and performing some kind of operation or manipulation upon him. Hence his urgency that He should 'come down.' Still less did he suppose that there was power in Jesus to burst the bands of death; and hence his anxiety that He should hasten his departure, that He might be there before the child's death should render the case past hope or cure.

Perceiving this state of mind, our Lord, who in all his dealings with men kept their higher interests in view, resolved to try his faith, and to strengthen it by the trial. He said to him, 'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' There must have been something good, some germ of true faith, in this man; or rather, he received grace to believe; for he was satisfied with this simple assurance that all would go well with the child whom he had left in the last gasps of life. So well was he satisfied, that his anxiety altogether vanished. This is evinced by the fact, that although there was plenty of time for him to go home that afternoon, as it was but the seventh hour, he delayed his departure till the next day, perhaps that he might see and hear more of Jesus. On that day he was met, on his return, by some of his servants, who had been sent to relieve him from his anxiety by informing him that the child was well. He then inquired the time when he began to amend; and

hearing that 'yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him,' he knew that it was the very time when Christ had said to him, 'Thy son liveth.' He now perceived and knew that Jesus had been more kind to him than he had even dared to ask. If Christ had gone with him to Capernaum, it is quite likely that the child might have been dead before they arrived; and although it is possible the Lord might have raised him from the dead, yet this was more than the nobleman could have hoped or expected, and he would conclude that it was too late, that it was all over then. But Jesus had come to the relief of the child far sooner than the parent asked; for in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, He had laid an arrest upon the fever, and poured health into the child's veins, while the father was asking the Deliverer to walk twenty miles before He gave a cure.

The effect was most salutary upon the mind of this nobleman: 'he himself believed, and his whole house.' Believed what? He had before believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him as regarded his son; but now, in view of all these circumstances, and of what he had heard from and of Christ while in attendance at Cana, he is deeply impressed, he yields the adherence of faith, he enters into the number of his disciples, and gives himself to Him as to the Messiah that was to come. That his house also believed under the impression of the like circumstances, is natural; especially was it natural that the mother should believe; and if that mother was the good Joanna, 'the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward,' her subsequent history affords interesting evidence of the depth of her gratitude and the earnestness of her faith.

### *Thirty-fourth Week—Sixth Day.*

JESUS AT NAZARETH.—MATT. IV. 13-16; LUKE IV. 16-30.

OUR Lord proceeded from Cana to Nazareth, 'where He had been brought up,' and from which He had been so long away. His townsmen had heard much of Him during his absence,

especially concerning the recent miracle of healing at Capernaum ; and they were anxious, or more properly curious, to see and hear 'the carpenter's son' in his new character.

The next Sabbath afforded the opportunity they desired.

As had been his custom, Jesus went to the synagogue on that day, and 'stood up to read.' It may seem strange to some that, seeing He was not a priest or Levite, He should be allowed, not only to read the Scriptures, but to expound them in the synagogue. It must be understood, that to every synagogue there was attached an officer, whose business it was to provide for its orderly service. He offered up the public prayers, and exhorted, when there was no one else to perform these offices. It was not considered any part of his duty to read the Scriptures appointed for the day ; but the members of his synagogue being generally well known to him, he called out, for this purpose, such as he knew to be qualified for the task, or such as, by some sign or movement, expressed their desire or willingness to read. No one could, however, in any case, discharge this office until the ruler of the synagogue had signified his consent. As Jesus was a member of this synagogue, we must suppose either that He was called upon or presented himself to read, as He had no doubt often done before in the same place. We suppose the former to have been the case, as it was usual to lay this honour upon one who had been any considerable time absent, thus re-introducing him to the congregation with which he had been wont to worship. The readings for the day were divided into seven sections, each of which was read by a different person, so that there were seven readers to be provided. The proper, but not indispensable, arrangement was considered to be, that the first section should be read by a priest, the second by a Levite, and the other five, by any competent Israelites, but preferably by members of the synagogue ; and there was generally much readiness to hear those, whether strangers or members, who set up for religious teachers, or leaders of sects, in order that the people might have an opportunity of estimating their claims and judging their pretensions.

Thus we see that, on various grounds, it was perfectly natural that Jesus should stand up to read in the synagogue of Nazareth ; and it will also be seen that the passage He read, strikingly appropriate as it was, was not chosen by himself, but was that portion of the Scripture-reading of the day, which in due course fell to Him.

It was the custom to read the Scripture standing ; it was improper even to lean. The only exception was, in reading from the book of Esther, when the reader was at liberty to sit if he thought proper. Hence it was that our Saviour 'stood up to read.'

There was then delivered to Him by the *Chazan*, or 'minister,' or servant of the synagogue—who had charge of the sacred books, and part of whose function it was to take them from the chest, hand them to the reader, and afterwards receive them back—the roll containing the book of Isaiah, in which the prophetic reading for the day was to be found. The passage which it devolved on Him to read was short, being merely one long verse of Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> in which the prophet sets forth the offices of the Messiah. Having read it, Jesus sat down, instead of returning to the spot He had left ; and this was a sign that He intended to make some remarks on what He had read, for it was the custom of those who exhorted to sit down ; and when Jesus did so, the eyes of every one there were fixed eagerly upon Him to hear what He would say. He began by telling them that the Scripture He had read was that day fulfilled ; and we may gather from this, that He proceeded to declare that the long-predicted year of the prophetic jubilee was come, and that He claimed to be the One sent to open the blind eyes, and to offer liberty to the captives of sin and Satan. His words made an impression ; but it was only upon the surface, for the audience were unconscious of their spiritual bondage, and felt no longings for deliverance.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek : He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'—Isaiah lxi. 1.

Their astonishment that one, whom they had known from childhood, should speak with so much authority and power, soon gave way to doubt ; and the congregation, who, as is still the bad custom of the Jews, indulged in strange conversational freedom at their religious meetings, began to nod to one another and say, ' Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon ? and are not his sisters also here with us ? '—questions which virtually ask, how it was possible that such a man could speak in this tone, and do those deeds which rumour ascribed to Him. Incapable of appreciating, as the Samaritans had done, the value of the heavenly gifts which Jesus offered, they required (whether avowedly or not) that He should execute such miracles as He was reported to have wrought in other places, before they could recognise his claims.

Now, one of the fundamental principles on which Christ acted, forbade Him to accept any challenge of this sort, which He received more than once. He would do nothing for those who insisted on seeing in order to believe ; but He could do much for *them*—He could let them see convincing sights—who did not make seeing the condition of their belief. Jesus knew all that they thought, and all they whispered to each other ; and, accurately measuring their state of feeling, He was well aware that, while they remained in that state, nothing He could do would convincingly satisfy them. He therefore spoke to their thoughts and murmurs, defining the real nature of their demand, and refusing to comply with it. He showed, by various examples, that the grace of God acted freely, and He gave it to be understood that miracles were not to be extorted from Him, to satisfy unreasonable demands, or to meet ungrounded misbelief.

On thus learning that their curiosity after miracles was not to be satisfied, and that no special favours were to be bestowed upon them, the congregation became exasperated to madness ; and they rushed out of the synagogue, hurrying Jesus along with them, intending to thrust Him over one of the high cliffs of the hill on which the city stood. But his hour was not yet

come, and on the way He escaped from their hands—whether by miracle or by the exercise of natural providence, aided by the presence of his disciples, is not recorded.

Thus our Lord verified his own proverb, which He had used before with reference to Galilee in general, and which He had cited in the synagogue with reference to Nazareth in particular: ‘A prophet hath no honour (or is not accepted) in his own country,’ and, as He added on another occasion, ‘among his own kin and in his own house.’ This is indeed, as stated, a matter of general experience, as wide as life; and parallel expressions have been abundantly cited from pagan writers, and may be found among the choice sayings of every country. In all ages, distinguished men have been least esteemed by those who have been witnesses of their entire history, in which the physical has been necessarily more conspicuously visible than the mental or the spiritual. Jesus also, in regard to his human nature, had developed himself according to the general laws of man’s life; and it thus became difficult for his townsmen to recognise his divine highness in his human lowness.

### *Thirty-fourth Week—Seventh Day.*

#### THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

MATT. IV. 18–22; MARK I. 16–20; LUKE V. 1–11.

ON quitting Nazareth, Jesus proceeded to Capernaum, which henceforth became his headquarters. This was then one of the most important towns upon the western border of the lake of Tiberias. If its site has been correctly identified at the now forsaken spot called Tell Hum, towards the northern border of the lake,<sup>1</sup> there are remains of splendid public buildings to attest its ancient consequence. The site is also delightful,

<sup>1</sup> This was the conclusion in which travellers had rested, until Dr. Robinson set up a claim in favour of another site, now called Khan Minyeh, much more to the south. This claim seems to us to have been shaken, and that in favour of Tell Hum re-established, by more recent writers.

commanding a fine view of the lake, and of the steep and high mountains around. Behind it the land is fertile and well suited to husbandry, and the lake before it abounds with delicious fish, and has its surface covered with wild ducks, which are easily snared ; and on these, as well as on other accounts, it may be said to be 'exalted unto heaven,' as our Lord once spoke of it. In all respects it furnished a place of abode admirably suited to his purposes, from the facility both of communication, as well by land as by the lake, with many considerable and flourishing towns, and of escape into a more secure region in case of any threatened persecution. These were among the considerations which probably determined Jesus to remain at this place ; but He also knew that an impression favourable to his ministry had already been made, by the recent cure of the nobleman's son ; and that He should here find the disciples who had at first attached themselves to Him, and whom He now purposed to take into more intimate communion with Him, as regular attendants upon Him. They were fishermen upon this lake, to which they had returned to resume their customary occupations, on which their livelihood depended—though at what time their separation from these took place, we do not well know ; perhaps after they had been at Jerusalem at the Passover with Him ; perhaps so recently as their arrival in Galilee, when He went to his home, and they to theirs : in either case, probably with the understanding that they would see Him ere long at Capernaum.

When there, an opportunity for taking them into a more fixed connection with Him was soon found. He was one morning walking upon the beach near Capernaum, when a crowd rapidly gathered around Him, as One of whom so many strange things had been reported, and about whom local curiosity had been so intensely excited. Their wish was such as He never repelled : it was 'to hear the word of God.' But they pressed inconveniently upon Him ; and his first post being on a lower level than theirs, was but ill-suited for addressing with advantage a large number of people. There were close by, upon the shore, two fishing-boats belonging to



fishermen who had been out all night upon the lake without catching any fish, and who were now, weary and dispirited, washing their nets before laying them out to dry, ere they went home to get such rest and refreshment as might fit them for the toils of another night. Into one of these boats Jesus entered, and desired the owner to push out a little from the shore ; and this being done, He addressed the crowd from the boat, secure from their pressure by a slight watery barrier, and elevated sufficiently for them to see and hear Him to advantage.

The boat which had afforded to Jesus this convenience belonged to Peter, who was there with his brother Andrew ; and the other boat was the property of Zebedee, the father of James and John, the two boats working in partnership. When our Lord had left speaking, He turned to Simon (Peter), and directed him to launch out into deeper water, and cast out his nets again. Simon then mentioned the fact that they had been toiling all the night—the time most suitable for fishing—and had taken nothing ; ‘ nevertheless,’ he added, ‘ at thy word I will let down the net.’ This has been generally understood to mean, that Peter had no faith in the result, and merely complied with the request of One whom, out of regard to their former transient relation, he recognised as his ‘ Master,’ and felt bound to obey. Since the words will equally bear the interpretation, it is more just to Peter, and more in conformity with his character, to understand him as saying, that indeed they had laboured until they had no more hope from the ordinary resources of their craft ; yet, since He whose authority He recognised, and whose power he revered, saw proper to give such a command, the case was altered, and he would hopefully cast down his nets once more into the deep. He did so ; and presently it was found that such an immense weight of fish was enclosed in the net, as it was impossible for the united strength of the two brothers to draw, or for the boat to manage. The net indeed began to break in their attempt to draw it. Perceiving this, the brothers hailed their partners in the other boat, who hastened to their relief ; and when, by their aid, the net

was at length drawn, its contents filled both the boats even to the danger of sinking. At this great miracle the partners, who as fishermen could estimate it even more accurately than we can, and who, from its having occurred in their own line of business, were probably more impressed by it than by many miracles which we might regard as more signal, were all greatly astonished; and Peter, always quick in feeling, and ever ready to act on the impulse of the moment, 'fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Andrew shared in this feeling, though not in its expression; and this state of mind formed the best preparation possible for true and full adhesion to Christ. He said to both of them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,'—a phrase by which they better understood their relation to Him, and of the office that lay before them, than probably they would have done from any other expression He could have used.

This was the real call of Peter and Andrew to the apostleship. Previously they had been disciples, which consisted with the retention of their ordinary pursuits and occupations; but now they were to give themselves wholly to Him, to follow Him wherever He went, to go wherever He sent them, and to be the constant companions of his labours, his trials, and his joys, in order that they might themselves be built up in the faith, and become witnesses of Him, and teachers whose influence should be felt to the end of time, and to the utmost limits of the habitable world.

They responded joyfully to this call; they conferred not with flesh and blood; but as soon as they had brought their ship to land, 'they left all and followed Him.' It will be observed that when this took place, Peter and Andrew were alone with Jesus in one of the two boats; and although John and James, in the other boat, had been suitably impressed by the miracle, it does not seem they had witnessed this latter proceeding, the two boats having parted from their close vicinity as soon as each had received its lading. It seems, also, that they steered for a point somewhat distant from that at which the others landed. This may be accounted for by the fact,

that Peter and Andrew had now no other object than to gain the nearest shore ; whereas the others would desire to take their cargo to the point near Capernaum where fish was usually landed. At all events, that some interval had elapsed is shown by the circumstance, that by the time our Lord, with his two followers, arrived at the place where the sons of Zebedee landed, they had discharged and sold their cargo, and were occupied with their father and 'hired servants' in repairing the damage the nets had received. The former acts precede the latter ; for the first anxiety of fishermen on reaching land is to dispose of their fish, before they find leisure to mend their nets.

When our Lord came to the place where they were thus employed, He at once called James and John to follow Him ; and they obeyed as promptly as Peter and Andrew had done. They also left *all* to follow Him. And that was not much, some have remarked, in either this case or the other : a boat and a few nets ! It was more. It was a forsaking of the place—of the homes around which, for them, all the charities of life were gathered—of the friends and neighbours with whom they had been accustomed to associate—and of the relations in whom their hearts delighted. It was an abandonment of the habits of life to which they had been used, and of the occupation in which alone they were skilled, and which furnished their subsistence : and this to attach themselves, not to one who was rich or great, or who could or did hold out to them any worldly advantages ; but to One who was as poor as themselves, a workman like themselves, and One with whom they were often to suffer peril, hunger, and thirst, and who could not assure them of a place where to lay their heads. Whatever they left, it was their *all*, and was as valuable to them as *may* be the house or land, the library, the office, the shop, of any one who reads this. No one can leave more than all he has ; and the 'all' of these disciples seems to have been underrated. We do not even now consider the owner of a fishing smack and nets a poor man ; and in the case of John and James, their vessel seems to have been one of size and value, for, it is re-

corded that they had 'hired servants' (at least their father had), who were engaged with them in mending the nets, when Jesus called John and James away. These hired servants were doubtless fishermen, paid by wages of money or fish, who went out with Zebedee's sons in the boat. The old man himself seems not to have been in the habit of going out upon this night-work ; nor needed he to do so when he had such sons, and could afford to hire labourers. Hence his presence is not recognised until we find him helping the others in mending the nets. Zebedee himself, as well as his wife, were probably believers in Christ ; accordingly the former, although present when the call was given, made no opposition to the withdrawal of his sons. This is the only time, indeed, that he appears personally ; but his wife we shall hereafter meet with, under circumstances which place beyond question *her* belief in Jesus as the Messiah.



## Thirty-fifth Week—First Day.

‘NOT AS THE SCRIBES.’—MARK I. 21, 22 ; LUKE IV. 31, 32.

ON the Sabbath-day following the miraculous draught of fishes, our Lord made his appearance in the synagogue at Capernaum, and availed himself of the usual opportunity, which the rules of the synagogues allowed, of preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The reception which He here met with was very different from that which He had experienced at Nazareth. We are informed that his hearers were ‘astonished at his doctrine ;’ and why? ‘For He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.’ It was, in both matter and manner, something new, and strange, and startling ; and coming in ‘the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power,’ it carried its own evidence along with it, working strong conviction in their minds.

It will be well, however, to consider what was the teaching of the scribes, with which that of our Lord so strikingly and favourably contrasted.

And here it is important to observe, that in some of the particulars in which the teaching of Christ differed from that of the learned teachers of his day, it differed also from that of Christian teachers. The scribes could only declare what they found set down in the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and their exhortations could only expand and enforce that which was understood to be the meaning and full purport of what they found written there. Had they brought forward any novelties not to be found in these ancient Scriptures, or not supposed to be fairly deducible from their contents, they would have laid themselves open to the charge of heresy. This applies equally to Christian teachers, who have no authority to put forth any new doctrine, and no right to build on any other foundation than that which Christ and his apostles have already

laid ; and who begin to stumble and fall among the dark mountains, so soon as they wander from that RECORD which has been left as a lamp for their path.

But here, where Jewish and Christian teachers feel equally bound to the records of their faith, Christ was altogether free, and spoke as one who claimed to be, as one who was, HIMSELF a sufficient authority for all He uttered, and as by no means bound to appeal to law or testimony, although He often did so, to silence the gainsayers or to convince the doubters. He spoke as one who was himself a lawgiver, equal to Moses, superior to Moses, and as one entirely competent by his own proper authority to abrogate any old law, and to establish any new law, without being accountable to the powers on earth, before which others bowed. His doctrine was his own. His mouth was a sufficient law to himself and to the world. Others said—others still say, Believe this, for it is written there. But He always says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' He says, Believe this, because I say it. No one before Him, nor any since, could ever speak thus ; and, therefore, with great truth and with just perception of the distinctive qualities of his teaching, his auditors on one occasion declared, 'Never man spake like this man !'

But there was another very serious point on which the teaching of the scribes at this time and since differed from that of our Lord, and from that of every sound and 'able minister of the New Testament.' They not only were of necessity tied to Scripture, but they voluntarily tied themselves to certain interpretations ; nor did any one attempt to gain, or expect to gain, attention to the exposition or interpretation he offered, without producing for it some antecedent authority. No preacher ventured to declare what appeared to himself the right view to be taken of any text of the law or of the prophets ; but invariably would say, 'Our rabbis, or our wise men say so and so ;' 'Our ancient doctors thought thus and thus.' The name of the particular rabbi or doctor was also usually given, and the tenets circulated were judged rather by the renown of the name than by the weight of the opinion. The great doctors whose names

were most frequently heard at that day, were Hillel among the Pharisees, and Shammai among the Sadducees. But the rabbinical writers have left a tradition concerning Hillel himself, which curiously illustrates this mode of teaching, and shows that even he was obliged to submit to it. 'The great Hillel taught truly, and according to the traditions respecting a certain matter. But although he discoursed of that matter all day long, they received not his doctrine, until he at last said, "So I heard from Shemaia and Abtalion."' "

This kind of teaching went for little but to display the memory and the learning of the teacher. It was to the hearers flat and unprofitable. It was also low ; for while it affected to be high in scholarship and knowledge, the teachers inevitably spoke as those who were not themselves masters of what they preached. Thus the word, even if in itself good, could not come from them with any life or force. It was not from the heart ; it was not aimed at hearts, and it did not reach them. But the teaching was not intrinsically good. It was full of curious questions and vain janglings that edified not, and brought no refreshment to thirsty souls ; while the teaching of Jesus, as shown in the Sermon on the Mount, to which the same observation is appended as on the present occasion, was open, plain, grave, animated, direct, and useful. These are qualities which teachers who cannot speak with the like *authority*, may imitate ; and those who are 'wise to win souls,' and who have no care but that, will do so, and may expect that God will not suffer his word, thus poured forth, to return unto Him void.

### *Thirty-fifth Week—Second Day.*

THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.

MARK I. 23-34; LUKE IV. 33-41; MATT. VIII. 14-17.

THE people in the synagogue at Capernaum had seen and had borne witness that Jesus was 'mighty in words ;' they had now to behold that He was likewise 'mighty in deeds.'

There was at Capernaum a man known by all the inhabitants to be possessed by 'an unclean spirit.' Into the facts attending such possessions we shall not this evening inquire, as other instances lie further on, upon which such an inquiry may more advantageously be grounded. This man was in the synagogue when Jesus was there, or perhaps entered it towards the close of his discourse. It may excite some surprise that he was admitted to that place. But the Jews were careful that a man thus afflicted should suffer as little as possible on account of his misfortune. He was allowed to go where he pleased, and no restraint was laid upon him, so long as his conduct was not dangerously violent. Such persons were indeed allowed many licences that would not have been permitted in a man responsible for his conduct. There was no particular reason for excluding them from synagogues more than from any other places; for the Jews did not transfer to the synagogues any of those ideas of sanctity which belonged to the temple at Jerusalem, nor accounted them in any way sacred places.

The unclean spirit knew that Holy One, and trembled at his presence. He cried out, through the voice of the man whom he held captive, 'Let us alone. What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.' Here, then, the powers of hell avouch the character and mission ('to destroy the work of the devil') to which Heaven had already borne its testimony. But Earth gave no responsive recognition. Heaven had spoken; Hell had spoken; but Earth still was mute.

Jesus himself, indeed, repelled such testimony now, as He did on other occasions. We are told that He rebuked the unclean spirit, and imposed silence upon him: 'Hold thy peace, and come out of him.' And He was obeyed. After casting the man upon the ground in strong convulsions, the unclean spirit departed reluctantly from him, with horrid cries of abortive rage.

How the wonder-workers of that age—for there were many who pretended to cast out devils—would have gloried in any



such testimony to their power as those which Jesus silenced and deprecated! It may, indeed, be conceived, from some points of view, that this testimony might have been useful in promoting the reception of his ministry; and it may be inquired, Why it was always checked and suppressed by Him? Some take it to have been the cry of abject fear, that with fawning and flattery sought to avert the impending doom; others compare the exclamations before us to those of a fugitive slave, who dreams of nothing but stripes and torments when he meets his well-known lord, and would then, by any means, turn away his anger. But our Lord's promptitude and decision in silencing this testimony, would seem rather to suggest that He saw it was intended for mischief, and could in the end accomplish nothing else. From such a source, whatever might be its immediate effect, it was likely to injure the estimation of Him in whose behalf it was borne; for the truth itself might come into discredit when the 'father of lies' bore witness to it. It might have given ground for, or sanction to, the charge, that his miracles were wrought by collusion with demons, or by unlawful necromantic arts. As it was, this charge did eventually arise, and is believed by the Jews to this day. It appeared even in his own time, and was more than once thrown in his teeth: 'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils,'—a charge which He met with such awful indignation as may well suggest the importance for evil which He attached to it, and explains the care He took to repress the insidious declarations in his favour of the unclean spirits whom He cast out.

This miracle—the first of the kind—struck the people with amazement; and rightly recognising miracles as evidence of Christ's doctrine and mission, they exclaimed one to another, 'What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.' In fact, a strong enthusiasm was excited about 'the Prophet of Nazareth,' not only in this neighbourhood, but throughout Galilee; no unsuitable preparation for that almost triumphant progress which He soon after made in this region.

Peter and Andrew, although of Bethsaida, had their abode at Capernaum, and dwelt together in a house there. To that house Jesus repaired to partake of their noontide meal, after He left the synagogue. It was then that Jesus heard that the mother of Peter's wife lay in the house ill of a fever ; on which, with benevolent zeal to relieve her from her peril, and to release his friends from their anxiety on her account, He arose and desired to be led to her. Approaching the place where she lay, He took her by the hand and lifted her up ; and immediately the ' great fever ' departed from her ; and instead of being, as is usual when one recovers from a fever in the natural way, left with exhausted energy and prostrated strength, the woman found herself not only cured but so invigorated by that touch, that she immediately left her bed, and hastened to give her aid in providing what was needful for the entertainment.

The news of this cure soon got out into the town, and, together with the miracle of the morning, excited a most lively sensation through all its streets. One thought seemed at the same time to take possession of the mind of every sick person in the city—that now at last the means of cure for them—of release from their sufferings—was offered, and that they had only to hasten to Peter's house to obtain relief from Jesus of Nazareth. With their notions, they dared not go, much less could those who were not able to go themselves be carried, until the Sabbath-day had reached its close. But never, perhaps, was the ending of a Sabbath-day more anxiously waited for. We can conceive how many mounted to the house-tops, or put their heads out of the lattice, to see how near the sun was to its setting ; and no sooner did its last beams cease to redden the still waters of the lake, and its broad disc disappear behind the uplands of Galilee, than the houses seemed to empty out all their inmates into the streets, along which presently the ' sick, the lame, the blind, the paralytic, the possessed—walking, led, supported by crutches, or carried in their beds—attended by numerous friends, streamed along, converging to that one street which contained the obscure dwelling of the two fishermen. Here the crowd became so great that,

as the narrator emphatically remarks, 'all the city was gathered together at the door.' They came not in vain, nor was any one sent disappointed home. Jesus healed them all. And had it been possible for the sick of all the world, instead of all the city, to assemble before that door, they could as easily have been healed by Him, who 'himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.'

The sun which had set upon an expectant crowd of miserable creatures, arose next morning upon a city from which disease had fled.

### *Thirty-fifth Week—Third Day.*

#### THE LEPER.

MATT. VIII. 2-4 ; MARK I. 35-45 ; LUKE IV. 42-44, V. 12-15.

WHEN Simon and his friends went the next morning to the house where Jesus lodged, they found that He was not there. He had at break of day gone out, and retired to a solitary place, where He might indulge in communion with his Father in secret prayer.

The disciples, therefore, set forth to follow, having probably, from previous observation of his habits, some notion of the quarter where He was likely to be found. As they went along the town, they failed not to observe that the popular movement respecting Jesus was reviving with the awakening day ; and they met clusters of people who were eagerly inquiring after Him, or watching to see or hear Him. This was told Him by Peter, when they had found the place to which He had withdrawn. Upon this He announced his intention of commencing a tour through Galilee, that the benefits He had the power to impart, might be the more widely diffused. So, attended by them, He proceeded from place to place, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. The consequence was, that crowds gathered to Him, under

various influences, wherever He came ; and his fame flew far and wide throughout all Syria. The sick were brought to Him from every quarter ; and although the diseases under which they suffered were, as enumerated, mostly such as in that day were accounted incurable, it needed but a *word* from Him to heal them. It is therefore not strange that, between the desire to hear his new doctrine, given forth in a style so fresh and peculiar, and the hope of witnessing his miracles or profiting by them, numbers of people resorted to Him from considerable distances ; and that these, instead of dispersing like the local crowds, followed Him wherever He went, their body being replenished by new-comers as fast as those who were satisfied withdrew. Some of them were from beyond the Jordan ; and this explains how He came to be so well known when, not long after, He made his appearance in that region.

Only one of the miracles of this journey is particularly recorded, and that, perhaps, because it was the first of its kind. It was the cure of a leper. There was no disease accounted more absolutely incurable than leprosy. No one who suffered under it even entertained the hope or expectation of cure, except by the wearing out of the disease ; nor did any of the physicians or charlatans (of whom there have been some in every age) ever attempt to cure it, or pretend to be able to do so. Hence lepers are among the last who are mentioned as seeking the aid of Jesus. Not that they had not heard of Him—not that many of them had not seen Him afar off. They talked to each other of his great doings in their isolated communities, and as they recounted the wonders of mercy He had wrought, they shook their sad heads, and remarked one to another that He had not yet cured a leper, and asked who, since the days of Elisha, had ever heard of a leper being cured. But there was one poor man who suffered a ray of hope to enter his heart, and being entered, he nourished it until it grew into faith. The more he thought upon the miraculous cures of which he heard, the more he felt that in the Prophet of Galilee dwelt a power such as the world had not before known, and which it were idle to limit at leprosy. Yes, He *could* cure him ;

but *would* He do so? Would He deign even to look upon an object so loathsome and so vile? Would He not rather, as scores of famous teachers and learned doctors had done, warn him from his path as a pollution? The poor leper may be forgiven this doubt; for his affliction had not allowed him to enter the cities in which Jesus taught, or to mix in the crowds that saw his miracles. He had not therefore been able to witness the divine compassion that so often beamed from the Saviour's eyes, or to hear the tender gentleness of those tones in which He spoke to the cast down and the miserable.

Well, then, Jesus could doubtless heal him; and it remained to see if He were willing. He could at least try. He lost nothing—nothing, alas! but hope—if he were repelled: he gained much, if he were accepted.

This concluded, there remained yet the difficulty of gaining access to his presence. He could not go into any town to seek Him, nor could he, to approach Him, enter the crowds by which He was usually in public surrounded. There was but one course, and this was to wait upon the road leading to Capernaum, when the return of Jesus was expected, and to accost Him as He went by with his disciples. He went, he waited; and doubt not that his unleprous heart beat in audible throbs, when he at length beheld the near approach of One who *might* deliver him from the horrible bondage in which he had lain so long. He advanced towards our Lord as He came nigh, and laying his head low in the dust before Him, he cried, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' Oh! the agonizing suspense of the moment that followed! But it was not protracted. A replying voice, that went at once to his heart and filled it with rapture, said, 'I will;'; and our Saviour, moved with deep compassion, put forth his hand and touched him—him whom no unleprous hand had touched for years; and the same voice, which never left his memory more, said to him, 'Be thou clean!' At that word a change passed over him; he felt new blood tingle through his veins; he felt the flush of healthy life in all his tainted members; he knew that his leprosy had passed from him; and he stood up cleansed,

enfranchised, restored to his family and friends, and to all the blessings of social life. Probably in the fulness of his thankfulness and joy this man would have followed Jesus from that hour ; but he saw the necessity of following the directions of his-Healer, that he should repair to Jerusalem, and there present himself to the priest to obtain from him that formal recognition of his freedom from leprosy, without which the law would not hold him clean. Besides this purpose of restoring the man to his civil and religious rights, the examination by the priest, and his attestation of his being no longer a leper, served to make the priest himself a testifying witness to the reality of the miracle. No one could, after that, question that the cure had been most real and effectual. The priest, well instructed in the signs of leprosy, examined such persons carefully, and kept them apart for seven days, when, if no signs of leprosy appeared, he performed the rites of purification prescribed by the law, and declared them clean.

In another matter the restored leper found obedience more difficult. Jesus enjoined him to say nothing to any one of the way in which he had been healed. But feeling that he had not merely been cured of a disease which all men believed hopeless, but by that cure had been restored to all that made life a blessing, and his heart bursting with thankfulness to his Benefactor, the poor man could not contain himself, but 'went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter.' We can hardly find it in our hearts to blame him severely. His gratitude, and his reluctance that his Deliverer should fail of any of the honour due to Him, considerably excuse his disobedience. The result, however, was very inconvenient to Jesus ; for the crowds that pressed upon all his steps became greater than ever, so that He was for the time unable to enter Capernaum openly, but remained mostly in the secluded places which the neighbourhood offered, where He addressed the manageable congregations that came, and healed the sick that were brought to Him.

**Thirty-fifth Week—Fourth Day.**

THE PARALYTIC ON THE HOUSE-TOP.—MARK II. 1-4 ;

LUKE V. 17-19.

As soon as the first excitement created by the cure of the leper had subsided, our Lord again appeared in the town of Capernaum, where, in his own house, or perhaps in that of Peter, He declared his doctrine to those who repaired to Him.

It being ascertained where He might be found, persons of consideration repaired to Capernaum, not only from other parts of Galilee, but even from Judea and Jerusalem ; some, doubtless, in search of benefit to their souls, some from curiosity to see and hear One whose name was in every mouth, and others to watch whether any dangerous principles lurked in a doctrine so actively promulgated. Among these—and all, probably, belonging to the last mentioned class—were Pharisees and doctors of the law. With persons of this class sitting by, Jesus was one day addressing a dense congregation in the house, when a circumstance occurred which has been greatly misunderstood for want of an accurate apprehension of the difference between oriental houses and our own, and which may, therefore, render some details on this subject necessary, so far at least as may be of assistance in explaining the transaction.

Our own houses usually front the street, towards which they display all their ornamental architecture ; and as our houses are double, or have one room or set of rooms behind another on each floor, together forming the thickness (or, as it is called, 'depth') of the house, there is another secondary front behind, with windows to give light to the back rooms, and looking towards a court or garden in the rear.

All this is different in the East.

There are no back rooms, and consequently no need of two fronts to a house. The front, instead of being towards the street, is turned towards an inner court, and the back is presented to the street in the shape of a lofty dead wall, of

the height of the house, and generally constructed of mud. There is, however, a latticed window high up, or a kind of projecting balcony screened with latticed work, belonging to an apartment called in Scripture 'the summer parlour,' and 'the chamber in the wall.' The outer gate, being of necessity towards the street, is, of course, at the back of the house. A person does not enter by this at once into the court, but goes through a low passage; nor, when the door is open, can one see through into the court, or view any of the interior building. This is avoided by making the actual entrance into the court, not at the end of the passage, but in one of the sides near the end. Passing this, we are in the court. We do not here find merely one front of building looking into it, but two or three, as the case may be, though seldom four. The reason is, that



the easterns do not build their houses in many storeys, but lay out, side by side, the chambers which we pile up over each other; so that an eastern house, with not more accommodation than we, with our double rooms and floor above floor, can



rear upon a contracted foundation and with one narrow frontage, will, in the East, require a large area, and a frontage extended around the sides of the court. There are usually but two floors—the ground floor and an upper floor. The ground floor comprises the kitchen, store-rooms, and various domestic offices; and the family lives in the upper floor, the chambers of which look into and open into a gallery, to which there is access by one or two staircases, usually of stone. The gallery is generally broad, and is covered with a boarded roof supported by wooden pillars. This roof effectually shades the inhabited rooms from the sun.

We are speaking of the house as having only one court, as that is sufficient for our immediate purpose. But it must be noticed, that the better sort of houses have often two courts, one within another, and sometimes even three. In this case, as all but the outer court are the private parts of the house, to which no strangers or visitors have access, the transactions recorded could only have taken place in the outer court, if, which seems to us not likely, the house in which our Lord was had more courts than one.

The middle room of the principal frontage, which is commonly the one on the side of the court farthest from the entrance, lies wholly open, displaying the decorated apartment in which the master of the house receives and entertains his visitors. In this room, we suppose, the doctors of the law and other strangers, who are described as 'sitting by,' were seated, for there was no other place for sitting; while Jesus stood forth in the gallery, with his disciples and other privileged persons, and thus addressed the persons assembled in the court below.

It was then that some persons, bearing a helpless paralytic in his bed, came to the house, in the hope that Jesus would heal him. But the court, and even the inner door, being crowded, they could not get near to the place where He stood. What was to be done? Friendly zeal is inventive of expedients; and as the idea of going to the top of a house is as familiar to an oriental as that of going to any room in it,

it occurred to them that if they could get their afflicted friend to the roof of the house, it might be safely managed to let him down in his bed to the place where Jesus stood. But how were they to take him to the roof? Of the 'external stair' leading to the house-top, of which some writers speak, we have no knowledge—the access to the roof being generally, as far as we have seen, from the interior of the court. It is often, however, near the door which opens into the court, and they might, with a little entreaty and some pushing, have gained access to it. But as there is said to have been a great crowd even 'about the door,' we incline to think they availed themselves of an easier and more obvious expedient. This was to go next door, and ask leave to take their friend to the top of that house, where they could easily pass him over the parapet to the roof to which they desired to have access.

### *Thirty-fifth Week—Fifth Day.*

#### THE MOVEABLE ROOF.

MATT. IX. 2-8; MARK II. 4-12; LUKE V. 19-26.

HAVING brought the friends and their afflicted burden to the roof, let us consider what they had to do when they got there.

Many, founding their notions of the sacred text upon the houses they see around them, conceive that Jesus being in an upper room, the men removed the slates or tiles which covered it, together with the laths below, and by this opening let their friend down into the room. There are several objections to this idea; but one, as it is unanswerable, will suffice—that in the East roofs are not so constructed. Still there is a vague impression, that 'somehow' a hole was made in the roof, through which the paralytic was passed down into the room in which our Lord was.

But the construction of the roofs in those parts, which we know from Josephus to have been the same in our Lord's time as at present, renders this impossible; or, if not abso-

lutely impossible, at least the last thing that any one would think of.

The roofs are made of successive layers of beams, mats, branches and leaves of trees, mould, and trodden clay. Now, to make a hole through this mass, would not only have been a difficult and laborious operation, consuming much time, but would most assuredly have overwhelmed the people sitting in the room below with heaps of rubbish, and choked them with clouds of dust. There is another kind of roof formed of small brick domes, the intervals between which are filled up with earth, so as to give a level surface to the house-top. To open one of these would have been an operation of still greater labour and difficulty, and certainly not less dangerous to those below. Besides, we urge that our Lord was not in a room; for there He could not have been heard by the crowd, which manifestly thronged the court even to the outer doors.

Some who feel this objection as to the room, and as to the roof, place our Saviour in the court itself, and suppose that it was covered with an awning to screen it from the sun; and then go on to tell us, that the men being on the roof, lifted up the portion of the awning over the place where our Lord stood, and let the paralytic down to Him. This explanation is founded on the usages of a country, such as Barbary, where the galleries are not usually seen to shade the inner sides of the courts of the houses, and where, consequently, an awning is employed for that purpose. But such awnings are even there used only in the heat of summer; and it can be shown that the time of this transaction was in early spring, not long before the Passover, when no awnings are used, even in those quarters and in those houses where it is the custom to spread them out for shade in summer.

We return, therefore, to our house with galleries; and if there were such, it is evident that our Lord would not stand in the court itself, when He could address the people with so much more advantage to them and to himself from the gallery above.

Being then in the gallery, the course the men had to take was plain and simple. They had only to take up two or three of the loosely attached boards forming the covering of the gallery, and there was a clear and sufficient opening through which to let their friend down to the feet of our Saviour. This we believe is what they did ; and it seems to us to furnish a sufficient and satisfactory explanation of a transaction which by many has been thought so difficult, and which some have been hardy enough to pronounce incredible.

Jesus was struck by the faith in his power to heal, which these persons had evinced by the contrivances to which they had resorted, and by the pains which they had taken to procure for their helpless friend access to Him. He was willing to reward that faith by a greater cure than had been asked. He saw that the man laboured under a distressing consciousness of sin, by which it is very possible that his bodily disease had been much aggravated. We certainly know that all men are sinners, and therefore see nothing remarkable in this man being thus distressed, or that he should stand in need of pardon for his sins. But looking at the matter from the Jewish point of view, which *this* is not, we must recollect that the Jews considered diseases, especially privative diseases, as undoubtedly intended for the punishment of sins committed by the sufferer. This view is often alluded to in Scripture ; and indeed we meet with it as early as the time of Job. Apart from this, a Jew of our Lord's time, who paid due attention to all the observances which the law required, or which the rabbis imposed, was but little apt to regard himself as a sinner. But under this view, a man in a diseased condition must often have had serious and searching thoughts of the sins which he supposed had brought him to that condition, which he regarded as a testimony of the Lord's anger against him. If he grew well in due course by the use of ordinary means, he might suppose the Lord's anger had passed away ; but in the present case, the man may have feared that, by resorting to an extraordinary means of cure, he might lack that comforting persuasion ; and if his feelings in regard to sin were as sensitive as we have

supposed, he may for a moment have doubted whether he ought not to endure his disease, till a natural cure, though at a distant day, should bring to him the blessed conviction that his sins were forgiven, rather than resort to means of instant cure, with which, so far as he knew, no such satisfying assurance could be connected.

It remained for Jesus to show him that, seeing he was truly penitent, the assurance of forgiveness need not be dissociated from the means by which he now sought relief; and that it was in his power to give him *both*—the pardon and the healing.

He therefore said to him, 'Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

To those who were unable to see the Divinity in Him, this was more startling than anything He had ever yet said. The scribes who were present received it grievously. They muttered one to another that this was surely blasphemy, for who could forgive sins but God? The reasoning was in itself just in its principle, but false in its result. None could forgive sins but God; and for a man to pretend to exercise this divine prerogative, were blasphemy. But all that Jesus had said and done showed Him to hold a divine commission. One who held such a commission could not blaspheme; and when, therefore, He claimed the right to exercise a divine prerogative, He claimed to be more than man—He claimed to be God. And in Him that claim was not blasphemy, though it would have been denounced vehemently as such if it had been observed. Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, which were open to Him as a book, told them that it was indeed easy to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' for there could be no immediate or manifest sign to show that the saying had been attended with any result; but He would now show, by words which a manifestly miraculous sign should follow, that He claimed no powers which He could not establish, or which did not properly belong to Him. So He said to the sufferer before Him, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house!' and no sooner were these words spoken, than the helpless man sprang to his feet, lifted upon his head the mattress on which he had lain, and strode with

vigorous limbs out of the court, through the astonished and admiring crowd, which now instinctively made way for him.

As to the learned doctors and scribes, their wonder at this most signal miracle overpowered for the time their indignation at the antecedent declaration from our Saviour; but we may believe that the whole transaction tended to deepen the jealousy with which the Prophet of Nazareth began to be regarded by the class to which they belonged.

### Thirty-fifth Week—Sixth Day.

#### THE PUBLICANS.

MATTHEW IX. 9; MARK II. 14, 15; LUKE V. 27, 28.

THERE is nothing more evident throughout the Gospels than the scorn and detestation in which a body of people called 'the Publicans' were held by the Jewish people.

Publican was a Roman title (*Publicanus*) belonging to the collectors of the public revenue, and was applied equally to the Romans of rank and character, who held offices analogous to those of farmers of the revenue and commissioners of taxes, and to the natives in the subject provinces of the empire, who, in subordinate capacities, were content to earn their livelihood by extracting from their countrymen the tributes due to their foreign masters. The latter are the 'publicans' of the New Testament; and from the frequency with which they are mentioned, it would seem that, although doubtless the superior officers were Romans, the actual collectors were generally Jews.

It has not been our lot to be acquainted with any country, the inhabitants of which are so alive to their obligations to the state, as to receive with pleasure and regard with respect the collectors of the revenue, under whatever name they may come, whether tax-gatherers, rate-collectors, excisemen, custom-house officers, or toll-men. The popular dislike to this class of public servants has always existed everywhere; and in an eminent

degree it has always existed and does exist in the East, where the antipathy to anything like a regular and periodical exaction for government objects, goes far beyond the dogged churlishness with which the drilled nations of the West meet the more complicated demands upon them. This may, among other causes, be owing to the fact, that the eastern tax-gatherer feels quite at liberty to use his stick freely upon the person of a tardy, inadequate, or too reluctant tax-payer.

But there was never any people, eastern or western, ancient or modern, who held taxation in so much dislike, and tax-gatherers in so much abhorrence, as the Jews did in the time of our Lord. The reasons were somewhat peculiar to themselves. The text, Deut. xvii. 15, was so interpreted as to imply that the law forbade the payment of tribute to strangers. It was also held that Israel must ever be of right a reigning nation; and all believed that it would soon, under King Messiah, become a glorious and triumphant one. The taxes imposed by the Romans were therefore regarded with disgust and impatient abhorrence, as badges of the national dishonour; and those Jews who made themselves the instruments of this disgrace to their country were accounted the vilest of the vile, the scum and offscouring of the earth. They became in fact outcasts from all society, except that of their own degraded class. No decent man would partake of their food, entertain them at his own table, or enter their houses. They were not allowed to enter the synagogues or the temple, or to take any part in public prayers. No offerings from them were accepted at the temple; they were not permitted to hold any office, even the lowest, in the courts of judicature; and in these courts their testimony was not admitted in any cause. Hence it became as a proverb, applicable to one who was to be shunned or cast forth, 'Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' Matt. xviii. 17.

This public stigma upon the office inevitably reacted upon the officers. An office labouring under such odium, and involving such great social penalties, could not be undertaken by respectable men, who had regard for their character and

honour. But there will always be found reckless men willing to undertake any employment, and to whom there is a certain pleasurable excitement in the opportunity of avenging upon society the hate of society against themselves; needy men, to whom constant and well paid employment affords ample compensation for the 'scoffs and scorns of the time;' and grasping men, to whom opportunities of gain from undue exactions in the exercise of their office, supply inducements which the public scorn cannot countervail.

Hence the character of this body speedily came down to a par with the public estimation of it; and the publicans were a sort of heartless rascals, who met the pointed finger of scorn with that of defiance, and were in all respects fully deserving of the social exclusion to which they were doomed by public opinion. But there were exceptions, and bright ones, though they were rare; and it was not to be supposed that our Lord would sanction by his example the social ban upon men who had souls to be saved, and whose employment had nothing in it radically evil, and might be worthily and honestly discharged. He therefore defied the prejudices of the time by treating publicans as He did other men, associating freely with them when occasion presented, and more than once conferring upon them signal honour. For this He was several times stigmatized as himself 'a publican,' and 'a friend of publicans and sinners.'

It was, therefore, probably not without a special object, that He made choice of his next apostle from this body. It was frequent in that age for a person to bear two names, and this publican, the son of Alphæus, was called Levi, and also Matthew, which is the same as the Syriac name Matthias, or the Greek Theodore.

This publican is the evangelist to whose honoured hand we owe the first Gospel.

He was sitting by 'the receipt of custom;' and as it appears that it was not in the town, or at the gate, but by the sea-shore, it is presumed that he was one of those inferior officers employed to collect the dues levied upon the fish brought to shore, and



upon the vegetables and firewood received from the other side of the lake. When Jesus passed by He called to him, saying, 'Follow me;' and 'he left all, rose up, and followed Him.' The same evening Matthew, who had a house in Capernaum, gave an entertainment to his new Master and brother disciples; and doubtless strict pharisaic opinion felt itself outraged, scarcely less by our Lord going to a publican's house to eat with him, than by his choosing such a man for one of his most honoured servants and closest companions. It may be observed, however, that Matthew was no longer a publican when he had quitted the office, though even to *have been* a publican was in those days reproach enough.

### *Thirty-fifth Week—Seventh Day.*

#### THE POOL OF BETHESDA.—JOHN V. 1-4.

FOLLOWING the course of our Lord's history, we next find Him again at Jerusalem to take part in the celebration of the Passover<sup>1</sup>—the second since the commencement of his ministry.

St. John states that there was 'at Jerusalem, by the sheep *market*, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches.' In the original Greek of this text there is no word answering to 'market;' and therefore, instead of that word, any other better suited to complete the sense might be substituted. Some do substitute the word *gate*; seeing that a 'sheep *gate*' is frequently mentioned by Nehemiah, while there is no sheep *market* mentioned in Scripture, or by any Jewish writer. The sheep *gate* may have been so called, because it was the gate by which sheep were brought into the city; but we are not aware of any such custom in the East, as that of

<sup>1</sup> St. John says only 'a feast of the Jews;' but that it was the Passover, has been shown by many convincing arguments not necessary to be produced here, a convenient summary of which may be found in Dr. Robinson's *Harmony of the Four Gospels*, pp. 190-192. Boston 1845.

bringing live sheep or cattle into a town for sale. They are usually sold in the early morning outside the towns, near one of the gates ; and this is always the same gate, that people bringing cattle from the country may know to which gate to take them for sale. The sheep gate might *also* thus be the sheep market. Some complete the sense by joining the words 'sheep' and 'pool,' and make it the 'sheep pool,' and suppose it may have been a pool in which the sheep used in the temple sacrifices were washed. But it was not required to wash the victims before they were slaughtered, and for the subsequent washing provision was made in the temple itself. We may conclude, therefore, that it was the sheep gate, which was also the sheep market.

Much search has been made for this pool of Bethesda ; for there seems no reason why it should not still exist. It is thought to have been found in a now dry basin or reservoir



which lies under the north wall of Temple Mount ; indeed so close under the wall, that the south side of the reservoir seems to form part of it. This basin is very large—no less than 300 feet long by 130 broad, and its depth is 75 feet, without taking into account the rubbish which has for ages been accumulating in it ; so that it must have been anciently much deeper. Although this basin has long been dry, it is plain that it was

formerly a 'pool' or reservoir, as it is cased over internally with small stones, plastered with cement. The west side is thus built up like the rest, except towards the south-west corner, where two lofty vaults extend westward; and the traveller is told that these are two of the 'five porches' mentioned by the evangelist.

The question of the identity of this 'pool' with that of Bethesda is not one to which we mean to invite the attention of the reader. Suffice it to say, that it seems more likely than anything else which can now be found in Jerusalem to have been that pool.

The name of the pool, 'Bethesda,' signifies 'house of mercy,' or 'abode of mercy.' And we are at no loss for the reason of this name. It had been observed that, at particular seasons, a peculiar commotion took place in this water, and that, for a short time after such commotion, it possessed such strongly sanative properties, that those who were foremost in getting into the water, were cured of the diseases with which they were afflicted. In all this, so far, there is nothing we find any difficulty in explaining. The mercy of God has dispersed over the earth many healthgiving fountains, whose waters offer effectual remedy for diseases which no physician can cure. This pool of Bethesda does not seem to have had any such properties in its ordinary or quiescent state; but at certain seasons it received the overflow of some hidden but highly salubrious spring or springs, causing a bubbling commotion at the point of influx, and whoever stepped in *there*, and laved his body in those healthful waters, before their effect was lost by diffusion through the large pool into which they came, was healed of his disease.

Thus far all might seem plain enough. But a difficulty has been found in the declaration of the evangelist, that 'an angel went down into the pool and troubled the water.'<sup>1</sup> It is not

<sup>1</sup> This clause does not exist in all the manuscript copies of Scripture, and has hence been rejected by some as of no authority—as an interpolation. But it is found in many manuscript copies of the New Testament, and its genuineness is maintained by the best textual critics, besides that it is

here to be understood as stated, that the angel did this visibly, or was seen to do it ; but that the peculiar property imparted to the pool at particular seasons, was by the special favour of God, through the ministry of an angel. It was the custom of the Jews to ascribe all such favours, and all extraordinary manifestations in what we call 'nature,' to the ministry of the angels of God ; indicating a fine religious feeling which they did well to cultivate, and which we do ill to neglect. It is a custom sanctioned by the sacred writers,<sup>1</sup> and so sanctioned, must be received as consistent with truth. It is supposed by some, that it is mentioned by John merely as the current impression of the Jews, and that he does not himself avouch it. If that were the case, he would most assuredly have said so, for no sacred writer is more careful than John to distinguish from his own statements things incorrectly reported. It *was* certainly the opinion of the Jews in this case ; for, observing effects so remarkable, they would naturally ascribe it to God through the ministry of an angel. If the notion was true, there is no reason why John should repudiate it ; and if not true, there is every reason why he should not appear to sanction it. But he does this without limitation ; he makes it his own, and the question ceases to be of any consequence, whether it is stated as his own explanation, or that of the Jews. We therefore receive the statement, because in either way it is his, and because it is in accordance with all that Scripture teaches. There was clearly something more at work than the *ordinary* operations of nature. Was ever any natural spring or fountain heard of, any bath or pool which had or could have *instant* effect in producing the cure of such diseases as those of the persons who are described as waiting there the moving of the water—'impotent folk, blind, halt, withered ?' What then hinders our believing that, in the beneficent providence of God, an angel was sent to unlock the sealed fountains, and give intensity of healing power to

largely authenticated by the citations or references of ancient Christian writers. We therefore take it as it stands.

<sup>1</sup> See among other instances, Matt. iv. 11, xviii. 10 ; Luke xvi. 22 ; Acts vii. 53 ; Gal. iii. 19 ; Heb. i. 14.

their streams? What hinders but that unspiritual hardness which is growing upon the world as it gets old, and renders it unwilling to believe the Scripture doctrine, that the universe is replete with spiritual beings, employed in God's high service, and delighting in missions of mercy to mankind?

There can be little doubt that the story of the angel's descent into the pool, in John v. 4, is an interpolation. It is wanting in all the oldest and best manuscripts of the Gospel, and was probably inserted by some later hand from a tradition. The tradition may have originated in some peculiar periodical movement in the waters of the pool. There is no evidence whatever that the large tank or moat inside St. Stephen's gate is the true Bethesda. It seems much more plausible to identify the pool of Siloam with Bethesda. It is situated on the slope of the hill, south of the Haram or temple area. It measures 53 feet in length, 18 in width, and 19 in depth. Along one side are the remains of six ancient columns, which probably once supported a porch. The water which supplies it flows through a subterranean conduit, hewn in the rock, from the Fountain of the Virgin. It is remarkable that the Fountain of the Virgin is intermittent, the water not flowing regularly, but suddenly rising and falling again at intervals with a gentle murmuring sound. During the winter, there are three or four rises a day; but in summer only one, and occasionally one in two days. May not this curious natural phenomenon be the origin of the story of the angel descending into and troubling the water, which has been interpolated into the text of our New Testament?



## Thirty-sixth Week—First Day.

THE IMPOTENT MAN.—JOHN V. 5-47.

WHEN Jesus passed by the pool of Bethesda, He saw a crowd of miserable objects lying about, waiting for the moving of the water. His compassionate eyes were especially drawn towards one poor creature who had been a helpless cripple for thirty-eight years, and whose quiet but intelligent face expressed no eagerness of expectation, but had settled into the sober patience of hope deferred. Still he had no idea of regarding a cure as possible from any other source than from this pool ; and when, therefore, our pitying Lord, knowing his melancholy case, asked, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' naturally misconceiving the question, he simply began to relate that, being from his helpless condition unable to reach the water, and no one being willing, in the excitement and struggle of the moment, to put him in when the water was troubled, he had never been able to secure the benefit for which he had waited so long. The reply of Jesus was conveyed in the most welcome words that ever fell upon the ear of man: 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk!' What a command was that to a man who had for nearly forty years—perhaps all, or almost all, his life—lain in that forlorn condition, during which his poor limbs had forgotten what walking meant, if they ever knew! Yet at that word, the man, radiant with gladness, arose and bore off, with firm step and healthy tread, the bed which had so long been the companion of his sad days and weary nights.

This was the Sabbath-day ; and the restored cripple had not gone far before he encountered those who told him, with horror on their faces, that it was unlawful to carry a burden on the Sabbath-day. His answer was, 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.' His

meaning evidently was, that the order of the person who had healed him was quite sufficient to account for and justify his proceeding. Then they asked, 'What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?' One would think that, in astonishment at such a miracle, their question would have been, 'What man is He who healed thee?' and that they would have lost in that all thought of the man's bed. But the miracle they overlooked and thrust aside, regarding only the alleged infraction of the Sabbath-day.

The man had no previous acquaintance with the person of Jesus, and had soon lost sight of Him in the crowd. He could not, therefore, furnish the information they demanded; but meeting his Benefactor a few days after, he learned who He was, and hastened to inform the questioners that 'it was Jesus who had made him whole,'—in which we observe *his* mind dwelling exclusively on that part of the case which *they* had put out of sight. He thought only of the healing; they only of the bed being carried on the Sabbath-day. This seems to us to show, that the man, in his simplicity of heart, conceived that these persons only wanted to know his Healer, in order to render Him honour for the great work He had done. But it was far otherwise; for the Jews were so exasperated that they began to persecute Jesus, and sought to bring Him to his death as a Sabbath-breaker. This gave our Lord occasion to deliver an impressive discourse. As it is not our object to expound our Lord's discourses, we need only state, that the general purport or collective meaning of this one was to declare, that there existed a perfect unity of mind, and will, and operation between the Father and the Son. The works of the Son were really divine works; so that neither could He be justly accused of Sabbath-violation for working on the Sabbath-day, nor of blasphemy in making himself equal with God.<sup>1</sup>

Of this crime of blasphemy, some very plain declarations made by Him in this discourse had led them to accuse Him. He admitted the interpretation put upon his words, but denied

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. JOHN BROWN'S *Expositions of the Sayings and Discourses of our Lord*, i. 86.

that the claim imputed was any blasphemy in Him, and proved that it was not.

In the course of this address, after urging them to 'search the Scriptures' for the ancient testimonies concerning Him, which would establish all that He claimed, and prove all that He asserted, He broke forth into the mournful exclamation, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.' It was to his enemies who panted for his life that He spoke; yet, seeing the perilous state in which they stood, He declares his longings for their salvation, and laments that they will not come to Him to receive it. Life can be found nowhere else but in Him; and He stands ready with both hands open to bestow it:

'He is able, He is willing,  
Doubt no more.

Why, then, is it that sinners hang back from Him, and do not rather hasten with glad feet to claim the blessings He has to bestow? He exacts no hard conditions; He requires only that we come to Him—come as lost sinners, who know that, if they are saved, they must owe their salvation to Him alone, and are willing to receive that salvation as a gift from his hands, purchased for them by a price no less costly than his blood.

The only reason why sinners remain unsaved is, that they will not go to Him, or will not go to Him in the only way by which access to Him can be gained. Some will not go at all; some will go any way but by that strait and narrow way which alone leadeth unto life. These things must be mysteries to angels, who have not known sin. If a man were to stand at Charing Cross, crying out that he would give half-a-crown to all that came for it, what rushing and striving there would be, and what eager crowds of people would presently pour down from Pall Mall and Martin's Lane, and rush up from the Strand and from Whitehall! But here, when One greater than all kings stands forth to offer gifts more precious than crowns and sceptres—the gifts of salvation, of eternal life—sinners feel no strong attraction towards Him, no really earnest desire for his blessings. Many pass heedlessly by; some do turn aside, but



seek to get near by any of the thousand ways that lead *not* to Him, and soon find themselves 'in wandering mazes lost.' Others move so slowly on, with reverted glances to the world they profess to have forsaken, that life's short journey ends before they have reached the Christ towards whom they have been travelling so wearily and long.

How can these things be ?

Alas ! it is sin—sin, and nothing else, that creates all this coldness of the soul towards Christ. Not *between* them ; for He has no coldness towards souls. He still invites. He still cries, 'Come.' He still stretches forth his gift-laden hands all day to a disobedient and gainsaying people ; and still He knows no grief but that they will not come to Him that they may have life.

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Second Day.*

THE SABBATH-DAY.

MATTHEW XII. 1-14 ; MARK II. 23-III. 6 ; LUKE VI. 1-II.

THE Sabbath was a divine institution, and as such it could not be abrogated, nor its prescribed observance altered or modified by any authority less than divine. When our Lord, therefore, claimed absolute power over the Sabbath-day ; when He declared that the Son of man was 'Lord even of the Sabbath-day,'—He claimed no less than divine authority, and was understood to do so. He might have abrogated it wholly if He had seen fit ; but his purpose seems to have been no more than to bring it back to its primary purpose as a day of free and blessed rest,—relieving it from the special observances and restrictions which the law of Moses had imposed, and which, being no longer needed in the service of the more spiritual nature which Christ introduced, were to be counted among things that were old and had passed away.

Yet it is to be observed, that while Christ claimed this absolute power, his actual operations, so far as brought under

our notice, did not affect any one of the Mosaic ordinances, as plainly and literally understood. We see Jesus again and again accused of Sabbath-violation for performing certain acts on the seventh day. But if we turn to the code of Moses in search of the laws alleged to be violated, we cannot find them—they are not there. The fact is, that in this, as in other matters, the letter of the law had, in our Lord's time, been overlaid by a mass of traditionary explanations, extensions, and applications, every one of which was regarded as of equal authority with the law itself, and every transgression equally an act of Sabbath-violation, and equally liable to be visited with the penalties of that offence. These traditions only did our Lord's Sabbath acts infringe. But of these traditions He always expressed his utter disregard, and often his reprobation. And his argument, in answer to the charges brought against Him in this respect, was—either that the particular act was not a violation of the law of Moses, but was in perfect accordance with its spirit ; or, that the power which the Father had given to Him was not subject to the limitations of that law.

The case which has already passed under our notice—that of the man carrying his bed through the streets on the Sabbath-day by our Lord's order—makes the nearest approach to a real infraction of the law ; and the charge founded on it, is therefore met by our Lord with an assertion of his superior authority. There is, indeed, no law in the books of Moses forbidding the carrying of a bed, or, more generally, of carrying a burden. But that the law was so understood by those whose authority we cannot dispute, is clear from Neh. xiii. 15-19, and from Jeremiah xvii. 21, 22. The ground of this is obvious. All *work* on the Sabbath-day was forbidden ; but the principle work of men who labour is the carrying of burdens : consequently the carrying of any burden was unlawful. Our Lord, therefore, replied to this only by an assertion of his authority, evinced, as it was, by the miracle He had performed. But, in fact, the carrying of his bed was anything but *work* ; it was a pleasure and a joy to the man who had been bedridden so long. It was a triumph. He led captivity captive, as he

bounded through the streets bearing the bed which had so long borne him. By this act, therefore, our Lord seems to have evinced his intention, and certainly He avowed his authority, to abrogate the Jewish Sabbath as such, and especially as it was then understood. Some have thought He intended to try the man's faith by healing him on the Sabbath-day, and by commanding him to carry his bed ; both which acts he must have believed to be unlawful. We cannot think that Jesus required any man to wound his conscience by doing what he believed to be sinful ; and it has escaped notice, that if Christ healed the man on the Sabbath-day, the man was lying by the pool of Bethesda on that day for the express purpose of being healed.

But let us turn to another instance, which occurred on probably the next Sabbath. Jesus was walking through the corn-fields with his disciples, when the latter, being hungry, began to pluck some of the ears of corn, and eat the grain, rubbing it out between their hands. This conduct was objected to as an infringement of the Sabbath. Did this lie in the walk, the gathering of the ears, the rubbing of them out, or the eating of the grain ? It was not the walking in the fields, for the rules to which we have referred allowed this to the distance of 2000 cubits (reckoned as so many paces) beyond the limits of a town, this being called 'a Sabbath-day's journey.' It was not plucking the ears of corn in another's field, for custom allowed, and still allows it. Dr. Robinson mentions that his people did this frequently (in Palestine), and ate it in the same manner as the apostles ; and when questioned on the matter, they said, 'This was an old custom, and no one would speak against it: they were supposed to be hungry, and it was allowed as a charity.' The mere eating could not, of course, be construed as unlawful.

What, then, was unlawful in the disciples' conduct ?

Simply the *plucking* of the ears, and rubbing out the grain between the hands. The act was made out to be an infringement of the Sabbath, thus : Servile work was forbidden on the Sabbath-day. Reaping is servile work ; and he who reaps on

the Sabbath-day, however little, is a Sabbath-breaker. But plucking ears of corn is a kind of reaping ; therefore, to pluck anything, even from the springing of his own fruit, makes one a Sabbath-breaker. Again, rubbing ears between the hands to get out the grain, is a species of threshing ; and he who does this, is therefore a Sabbath-breaker.

After this transaction, and after our Lord had replied to the objections of those by whom it was witnessed, He proceeded to the synagogue. There was in the congregation a man whose hand was withered. Observing that this man had attracted the attention of Jesus, and being aware of what was likely to follow, the Pharisees, who had now become his avowed enemies, determined to raise a discussion beforehand, that, seeing their former attempts against Him had been frustrated, probably from want of sufficiently definite evidence, they might extract from his own words matter on which to found an accusation against Him. This they did many times, but He never fell into the snares thus laid for Him ; his discreet, wise, and uncompromising answers being not only unassailable, but tending rather to their own confusion than to his.

The question on this occasion was, ' Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days ? ' If he said, No, He would condemn himself ; if He said, Yes, they would denounce Him for that opinion joined to his corresponding acts, seeing the traditions made healing on the seventh day to be a violation of its sanctity. A man might not, indeed, do anything for himself, or another for him, which would contribute to his own cure of a disease on the Sabbath-day, except in a matter of extreme danger, when it was allowable for him to profane the Sabbath by doing whatever the cure required. But it will be observed, that most of our Lord's Sabbath cures were of diseases not immediately dangerous, and therefore not open to this exception. The reply which our Lord made to the question was unanswerable, and ought to have filled these heartless hypocrites with confusion. He reminded them that the law allowed a man whose sheep had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath-day, to lay hold on it and lift it out. ' How much, then, is a man better than a

sheep?' He asked. There was a sudden pause, but no answer. Then, looking round upon them with indignation, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He turned to the afflicted man, and said, 'Stretch forth thine hand!' and immediately he held forth his hand, and it was instantly restored, and became as free from disease as the other.

The Pharisees were highly exasperated at this plain and significant rebuke, and indeed at the whole proceeding, and they left the synagogue with the full purpose of finding means for his destruction. It must have seemed to them difficult to accomplish this under the usual forms of law. Had He not set at nought all those traditions which, in their hearts, they honoured above the law itself? Had He not even assumed the power of dispensing with the law? Had not this obscure man of Galilee, as He seemed to them, dared to institute equalizing comparisons between himself and the great and ineffable Jehovah? Had He not plainly avowed himself the Messiah: not, as such, to lead Israel to terrestrial glory; but, as such, to give spiritual life, to exercise power over disease and death, and to sit on the throne of judgment at the last day?

They were, however, foiled in their immediate object by our Lord's withdrawal into Galilee. But after this memorable visit to Jerusalem, the pharisaic party never lost sight of Jesus, nor ceased to watch his footsteps with the most hostile intentions. Henceforth we find every opportunity taken of detecting Him in further violation of their statutes, and every pretext laid hold of for inflaming the popular mind against Him for his neglect, or open defiance, of their ordinances.

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Third Day.*

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

MATT. X; MARK III. 7-19; LUKE VI. 13-49; MATT. V.-VII.

ON returning to Galilee, Jesus proceeded in the first instance to the lake of Tiberias, where, as we have seen, He had fixed

his headquarters. Here He might at any time, by crossing the lake, place himself beyond the reach not only of the Jewish rulers at Jerusalem, but of the tetrarch of Galilee. Herod, however, is supposed to have been now, and for some time previously, absent at Rome; and if he was not, there was little to excite his hostility in the proceedings of a religious teacher who expressly disavowed any political objects; and he had little inducement to make himself the instrument of the hostile purposes of the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, especially as he had already incurred more popular odium than he liked for his treatment of John, whom he still detained in prison.

At our Lord's desire a boat was kept in attendance, in which He could at any time proceed to whatever quarter He desired, and on board of which He could avoid the pressure of the multitudes that followed Him about; or from its deck He could, as formerly, conveniently address the crowd upon the shore. In a little while, however, Jesus quitted this neighbourhood for another tour in Galilee.

Previous to this tour, our Lord, although He had probably always some disciples with Him, had not yet organized a body who were to become his constant adherents, his commissioned witnesses, and the appointed teachers of all that they might learn from Him, or that thereafter might be taught to them by the Spirit from on high. Such a body He now appointed, selecting from among his followers twelve whom He called apostles; and that they might be able to speak with authority when He sent them forth to preach, He imparted to them some measure of his own miraculous powers. They might heal diseases and cast out devils; but as the power of raising the dead is not mentioned, it was probably not imparted; indeed Jesus himself had not yet shown his own power to this extent.

With seven of these apostles we are already acquainted: Peter and his brother Andrew, John and his brother James, Philip, Bartholomew (otherwise Nathanael), and Matthew. The others, to whom we have not previously been introduced, are these: Thomas or Didymus, both names meaning a twin, the former in Syriac and the latter in Greek; another James,

the son of Alpheus ; Judas or Jude, called also 'Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus' (the latter being the Syriac for Judas, and the former perhaps from the place of birth), who was brother to this James.<sup>1</sup> Simon, called 'the Canaanite,' to distinguish him from Simon Peter, was not so named, as some have fancied, from his Canaanitish descent, nor from the village of Cana, but from a Hebrew word signifying a zealot ; whence he is sometimes called Simon Zelotes, a name which indicates that he had belonged to that Jewish sect called Zealots, which was animated by a most bitter and uncompromising zeal against the Roman rule, as a thing accursed, unlawful, and by every means to be put down. If Simon was really a member of this fierce sect, it was a great change for him to be placed thus intimately near to Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart.' The last of the twelve was Judas, distinguished from the other Judas by the surname of Iscariot, taken probably from the name of his native village.

We know nothing of the antecedent history of the five last named apostles ; but there can be no doubt that they were of the same condition in life with the others. It is usual to call them as a body 'peasants ;' but if by that term is understood such as husbandmen and shepherds, this does not seem to have been the case. Those of whom we do know anything were fishermen, and dwelt in towns, and probably some others were of the same calling, and all of the same class, men earning their living by some trade—'working men,' in short, as distinguished among ourselves from 'labourers' and 'peasants.' Our Lord himself had been born into this class ; and till He took his place as a public teacher, was known only as a working man of Nazareth. This class, intelligent everywhere, is especially so in the East, where the language of the working man is about as good, and his manners as polite, as those of any rank ; and public opinion quite recognises his fitness to discharge becomingly the duties of any station to which he may attain, or of any office he may undertake. Hence in the

<sup>1</sup> For further particulars respecting the apostles named James, see Evening Series, Forty-fourth Week—Seventh Day.

East no surprise is felt at a working man coming forward in any public capacity, political or religious, which with us might seem a strange thing. Thus we see that no one expresses surprise at the apostles appearing as public teachers. Persons of their grade received a good common and religious education,—the terms being with them indeed synonymous, education being simply regarded as an instrument of religious knowledge. They were taught to read and write, and instructed in the laws of Moses and in the history of the Old Testament; and those who were attentive might gain a good knowledge of the other parts of Scripture from the Sabbath readings in the synagogue. This supplied in part the deficiency of books; for, being copied by hand, and therefore consuming much time and labour, which had to be paid for in the price, books were scarce and expensive, and none but the rich could afford for their own use so costly a possession as a copy of the entire Bible, though copies of particular books might not be beyond the reach of working men.

We may be reminded that the Jews expressed surprise at the knowledge possessed by Jesus, saying, ‘How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?’ John vii. 15; and similarly in regard to Peter and John, seeing ‘they were unlearned and ignorant men.’ Acts iv. 13. But this means simply that they had not received what was considered a high theological education, which added to the common education, such as we have described, a *critical* knowledge of Hebrew, an acquaintance with the received interpretations of the law, and an intimacy with the traditions of the fathers; and whoever had not received this education in the schools, no matter what other knowledge he might possess, was regarded as an uneducated man by the arrogant Pharisees of that day.

The choice of the twelve by our Lord to be his ministers and followers, furnished an appropriate occasion for a public declaration respecting the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and the life and character required of those who would become his true followers. He therefore ascended an eminence that was near, and his disciples being gathered around Him, with the



multitudes spread out beyond, He delivered that impressive discourse known as 'the Sermon on the Mount.' In this discourse our Lord showed that the righteousness of which the scribes and Pharisees vaunted, and which the nation generally regarded as the perfection of holiness, went for nothing as a qualification for that 'kingdom of God' which He came to establish. He required something deeper, better, more spiritual; He required that those who came to Him should give Him their hearts, to be filled with holy and blessed things. The germ of this discourse is to be found in the words, 'I say unto you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Matt. v. 20.

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Considerable misapprehension seems to prevail, even in this enlightened age, regarding the social status and the attainments of the apostles, and of the writers of the New Testament. The general opinion is, that they were men taken from the humblest classes, and that they were, with the exception of Paul, wholly illiterate. What powers they exhibited in preaching, in argument, and in writing, are commonly supposed to have been the result of supernatural gifts and graces. And occasionally we find somewhat remarkable inferences drawn from these opinions, regarding the training and qualifications of ministers of the gospel in the present day. It would be a task at once interesting and instructive to investigate with critical accuracy the social position and the intellectual training of each member of the apostolic band, and especially of each New Testament writer. Such an investigation would show that they were not taken from the humblest classes, and that, in intellectual training, they far excelled those haughty scribes and Pharisees who sneered at them. I cannot attempt this task here; but let us just, in a few sentences, sketch the early life and training of John, of whom it is said, judging from a rabbinical standpoint, that he was 'an unlearned and ignorant man.' The facts of John's life and training are only gathered from incidental notices.

His father was Zebedee, a fisherman of Galilee; but of wealth and position, for he had hired servants. The Jews of that age were most careful in the training of their children, and it may be presumed that John received a liberal education. His intimacy

with the high priest, which comes out incidentally at the time of Christ's betrayal, seems to indicate that he had attended rabbinical schools in Jerusalem. His mother, Salome, was a woman of deep piety, and doubtless exercised great influence upon her son. From his earliest years, John must have been of a thoughtful nature. The cold formality of Judaism did not satisfy him. He sought for something deeper, something that would respond to the feelings and aspirations of his own soul. When the Baptist appeared with his loud call to repentance, and his sweeping denunciations of hypocrisy, John became his disciple. But even the Baptist's reform did not fully satisfy him. The Baptist was to John the predicted Forerunner; and while he heard him attentively and joyfully, his eyes were ever looking forward for the Messiah himself. Standing one day by the Baptist's side, Jesus passed by. 'Behold,' said the Baptist, 'the Lamb of God!' It was enough. From that moment John followed Jesus.

It is worthy of special note that John was one of the three disciples whom Jesus admitted, as it were, into the sanctuary of his inner life and companionship. They alone were privileged to witness the transfiguration; they alone accompanied Jesus when He restored the dead girl to life; they alone witnessed the agony in the garden. And while Peter, James, and John were thus favoured above others, John's loving heart and thoughtful mind appear to have secured for him a still more intimate communion with Jesus than even his two associates. He lay on Jesus' bosom at the last supper; he followed Jesus to the house of the high priest, to the judgment hall of Pilate, and to the cross; he received from Jesus the charge of Mary, his mother, conveyed in terms of touching pathos: 'Woman, behold thy son! Disciple, behold thy mother!'

John had opportunities of witnessing Christ's power and glory, of seeing the depths of his love, of learning the mysteries of his person, of learning the wondrous nature and results of his work, such as were enjoyed by no other. It is to this training—this intimate and long-continued communion of the beloved disciple with the living Saviour—that we are indebted for the development of those higher truths and more profound mysteries contained in the fourth Gospel. It is to the acute intellect of John, to his profound respect for and apprehension of every word that fell from the lips of Jesus, that we are indebted for the clear and full record of Christ's long and sublime discourses. While others were

attracted mainly by the wonders of Christ's miracles, the graphic pictures of his parables, and the startling details of his prophecies, John's philosophic mind aspired to higher themes. John was impressed by the mystery of Christ's person, 'God manifest in the flesh'; by the depths of Christ's love in assuming human nature and bearing human guilt; by the majesty of his work of grace, becoming the Saviour of the lost, and the life of the dead; by the vital but incomprehensible union between himself the living Vine, and his people the living branches; by the continuous exercise and infinite efficacy of his intercession on behalf of those for whom He suffered. John, too, comprehended more fully than others the nature of the Holy Spirit's work, and he appears to have felt the Spirit's influence more than others; for our Lord's words, as recorded by him under the Spirit's infallible guidance, embody the most sublime doctrines of Christianity.

Such was John's training, Jesus himself was his great teacher. From the moment when turning from the Baptist he joined the Messiah, he appears never to have left his side. He took supreme delight in the contemplation of that nature which was all love and mercy. He hung with rapt attention on every word that fell from Jesus' lips. He endeavoured to fathom every wondrous truth embodied in Jesus' discourses. In the closeness of friendship, in the unbroken intimacy of companionship, John appears to have asked and prayed until the clear full light of divine truth flashed upon his own anxious mind from that of his incarnate Lord. In a word, John was taught as never man was taught before or since.

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Fourth Day.*

THE DYING AND THE DEAD.—MATT. VIII. 5-13; LUKE VII. 1-17.

THE Sermon on the Mount was delivered at no great distance from Capernaum, and when our Lord had finished, He proceeded to that city.

There was a centurion<sup>1</sup> at Capernaum, who, if on duty there,

<sup>1</sup> The commander of a company or *centuria* of infantry, the number of which varied with times and circumstances from thirty to a hundred men. His military rank, therefore, corresponded apparently to that of captain in European armies; but was, in fact, somewhat higher—his duties being in many respects different, and his responsibilities greater.

as appears to be the case, must have been in the service of king Herod. That he was a heathen does not show the contrary, for Herod had foreign soldiers in his pay, and he, and others in the same position, liked to give military commands to foreign (and therefore heathen) officers, versed in the Roman arts of war. The case is in some respects parallel with that of the late Pasha of Egypt, who, notwithstanding the dislike of Moslems to Christians, had in his service many European officers (French, Italians, and Poles chiefly), some of whom, by conforming to the religion of the country, attained to high commands.

This centurion, however, like many other heathens of that age, unsatisfied with the old and worn-out popular religion in which he had been brought up, and his situation having brought him into such approximation to Judaism as enabled him to observe the great superiority of its moral and religious spirit, and the refreshing contrast which the simple purity of belief in one God offered, to the perplexing crowd of divinities which idolatry presented, was led to believe in *JEHOVAH* as the Almighty, and to render to Him his worship. Whether he had yet become a proselyte or not is doubtful ; but he had certainly evinced the reality of his faith by building a Jewish synagogue at his own expense.

The centurion had a faithful servant who had fallen sick, and whose life was despaired of. For this man the master evinced a degree of regard and solicitude which is highly to the credit of his character—as, indeed, is all that transpires concerning him.

At this juncture he heard of the arrival of Jesus, whose former miracles of healing in that place must have been well known to him. Indeed, a person of such consideration was likely to be personally acquainted with the 'nobleman' whose son Jesus had formerly healed ; and it is even probable that he had heard the particulars from his own lips. All his hopes were now placed in Jesus ; but remembering that he was a heathen, as was probably also the servant whose cure he sought, he feared that his request might be declined, unless supported by some influence which, as a Jew, Jesus might be supposed to respect.

He therefore applied to the elders of the city, begging them to use their influence on his behalf. Considering the obligation he had laid them under, their readiness to do this for him is natural. They therefore repaired to Jesus, and supported the application they made on behalf of the centurion by urging, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.' Our Lord having signified his readiness to accompany them, they were proceeding to the house, when the centurion having heard of his approach hastened forth, and with deep and earnest reverence explained that he had sent to Him as not counting himself entitled to apply directly to Him; and now he craved pardon for having ventured to suppose it necessary that He should come to his house in order to cure his servant. He was not worthy that He should come under his roof; nor could that be needful: 'Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.' This impressed Jesus greatly. The centurion's faith came out strongly in the very point where that of the nobleman had been deficient. He saw that the mind of this semi-heathen—free from the cloud of notions which obscured the Jewish mind respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom—had been enabled to realize a clear conception of his own lowliness and of the loftiness of the One to whom he spoke; a state of heart which has been in all ages essential to acceptance with Him. The distance is infinite; and it is done away—we become one with Him, not by his being brought down to us, but by our being enabled to mount up to Him.

Our Lord therefore turned round to those who watched the result of this extraordinary interview, and with marked emphasis declared, 'I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'

The centurion had asked Him only for a word. But not even a word was given. Probably Jesus made some sign or motion indicating that he should return to his house, and there he found his dying servant perfectly recovered.

Our Lord healed, probably, every kind of disease known in Palestine. He had raised the dying from the beds they had not hoped to leave again. But He had not yet raised the dead.

This alone was wanting to complete the evidence of divine power which his miracles offered. The very next day supplied this further attestation. He walked over to a town called Nain, which still exists, under the same name, as a small village about three miles south-west of Mount Tabor. It is an average day's journey from Capernaum ; so we may suppose that our Lord intended to remain there for the rest of the day and the ensuing night. He was attended by some of his disciples, and by a considerable number of people. As they approached the town, a funeral procession passed out—all cemeteries being then, as they still are in the East, outside the towns. It was a youth who was borne to his grave. He was the son of a poor woman—her only son—and she was a widow. Alas for her ! She had none but him ; and he was gone from her, and had left her most desolate. The joy, if not the hope of her life, was gone ; the staff of her age was broken. And as she followed the bier, tears flowed fast—tears such as only mothers—mothers of only sons—can shed.

Such a case commanded great sympathy, especially among a people whose appreciation of male offspring was so intense ; and as it was, and is still, in the East, considered a good deed, and a mark of becoming sympathy and respect, for neighbours and passers-by to turn and follow a corpse to its long home, a large number of the people of Nain gave to that forlorn mother the comfort of their presence at the funeral of her son. But greater comfort awaited her—such comfort as only that Stranger who now drew nigh could give. He saw all ; and his heart, which was the very dwelling-place—the throne—of pity, was deeply moved. He said to the mother, in accents which were alone sufficient to give comfort and to inspire hope, ' Weep not.' He then touched the bier, as if to arrest it ; and the bearers, obedient to that intimation, though they knew not why, stood still. Then He said to the corpse : ' Young man, I say unto thee, Arise !' And he did arise ; and not only arose, but began to speak, as if impelled by the power which had raised him, to give instant comfort and full assurance to his poor bewildered mother. Oh, with what thrilling joy did

she hear *that* voice, which from infant days had gladdened her heart so often, and which she had deemed hushed for ever among the ghastly silences of death !

There was only One whose joy could be comparable to hers—the joy of Him ‘who went about doing good,’ and who felt a sacred pleasure in bringing back gladness to the forlorn and broken-hearted.

The impression made upon the numerous spectators by this amazing miracle, was obviously powerful. The first feeling was that of awe. Then they glorified God ; some saying, ‘A great prophet is risen up among us,’ and some declaring that God had at length ‘visited his people,’ by sending the One so long expected, and with whom only such great deeds were possible.

There were, indeed, examples of raising the dead by the prophets Elijah and Elisha ; but with what remarkably contrasting circumstances of prayer, and effort, and delay ! whereas Jesus arrests a corpse on the road to the grave, and at once bids it live. The apostles also raised the dead ; but they confessedly derived their power from Jesus, and did nothing except in his name. It is always ‘in the name of Jesus of Nazareth’ they speak and work. Whereas He speaks in his own name as One possessing original and autocratic power : ‘I say unto thee, Arise.’

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Fifth Day.*

TWO INCIDENTS AT CAPERNAUM.

MATTHEW XI. 2-19 ; LUKE VII. 18-15.

WE find Jesus again at Capernaum ; and his stay there, before commencing another journey, is marked by two interesting incidents recorded by the evangelists.

The first of these was the appearance of some of John’s disciples at the place, on a mission of inquiry from their master. John had now been a year in prison, and Josephus states that

Machærus, east of the Dead Sea, one of the strong fortresses built by the elder Herod, was the place of his imprisonment. In that case the disciples must have come upwards of fifty miles to visit Jesus at Capernaum.

The inquiry they were directed to make sounds strangely in our ears. They said: John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, 'Art thou He that should come; or look we for another?' In other words, Art thou indeed the promised Messiah, or are we still to expect Him? That John, of all men in the land, should express any doubt on a matter in which he had received and delivered evidence so complete and conclusive, excites at the first view some surprise and disappointment, and has naturally led to inquiry respecting John's real object in sending to Jesus, and the full purport of the mission he appointed.

There is a notion that John had no doubt on his own part; but that being troubled by the doubts of his disciples, he had sent them to Jesus, that they might obtain from himself evidence of his Messiahship. This looks much like a contrivance to get over a difficulty; and it seems better to take the expressions in their plain meaning, as a message which John sent for his own satisfaction.

John was but a man, though a highly favoured and gifted one; and the most favoured men—even prophets and apostles—are subject to different frames of mind and feeling, and are at times comparatively feeble in faith and hope. This was the case even with John's great prototype Elijah, strong of heart and firm of faith though he was. Let us consider, further, that John had been for many months shut up in prison, and that this confinement could not but have a peculiarly depressing influence upon one who had so long been used to the free air and open life of the wilderness. He heard of the doings of Jesus; and as he had himself never claimed authority to work miracles, nor possessed the power to do so, he must have been suitably impressed by them. But although his views as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom were immensely in advance of those entertained by the nation at large, it is not clear that



he did not, and it is probable that he did, expect the Messiah to set up some visible reign—a reign of righteousness and salvation on the earth. He therefore watched what was to follow these miraculous demonstrations; and to him, in the weariness of his prison, the time appeared long. But nothing seemed to ensue. Our Lord proceeded in his work, teaching and performing miracles; and on more than one occasion, He had already appeared rather to shun than to seek the public recognition of his Messiahship. Let us understand, also, that John received all his information concerning Christ from his own disciples, who regarded his proceedings with some disfavour, and would naturally impart the hue of their own feelings to their communications. Although, therefore, John still believed that Jesus was all that had been testified of Him, and that He held a high and divine commission, he may have suffered a doubt to enter his mind, as to his office being that of the personage who 'should come,' that is, the Messiah, to whom the Jewish expectations bore reference. He may have failed, as many have failed since with fuller light, because after-light, to reconcile the prophecies of the Messiah's glory with those of his humiliation and simple beneficence; and may have been led to think that there might be two persons to appear in fulfilment of different functions, of whom Jesus was one, and not less illustrious than the other—but not *the* One to whom the national expectations definitively referred. We can easily believe that if John had seen and heard Christ for himself, or if he had received his information from better sources, no doubt on this matter would have entered his mind. But it seems clear that he had some kind of doubt; and we know not what it may have been, unless that which we have endeavoured to define.

Whatever his doubts concerning Jesus were, he very properly referred the ultimate decision of them to his own mouth.

It so happened that, at the time the messengers of John appeared before Him, Jesus was engaged in his great work of healing the afflicted by miracle. He proceeded with it; and when He had done, He turned to the messengers, and desired

them to go and tell John what they had seen and heard : ' How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised.' Nor was that all : ' The poor have the gospel preached unto them.' Thus He points to the miracles He had wrought as proofs of his Messiahship ; and then presents himself as one who, as the Messiah, had chosen his sphere of labour among the poor in mind and spirit, displaying his relieving and redeeming power to those who felt the need of it most, instead of presenting himself as a theocratic king to the nation which expected Him in that character, and into whose expectations the Baptist seems to have for a time partially, and only very partially, relapsed.

To this our Lord added a word of caution and warning, which to our mind seems clearly to show that He regarded John at that time as labouring under some delusion ; and as the question of one so generally respected as John, put to Him publicly, might have an injurious effect if not clearly and decisively met, our Lord said plainly, ' Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me ;' meaning, Happy is he who is content with these signs of my Messiahship, and is not offended because they may not exactly meet his preconceived expectations.

When the disciples of John had departed with this answer—which we doubt not was fully satisfactory to him—Jesus began to speak to the people around Him of the Baptist. Whatever doubt John might for the moment entertain respecting Him, He had none respecting John. He was a prophet, and ' more than a prophet.' He was the predicted forerunner of the Messiah, and the preparer of his way: No one, in all past time, had ever held a position comparable to that of John in the advancement and development of the kingdom of God, or had enjoyed a higher degree of religious illumination ; yet, He added, the least in the manifested kingdom—that is, the church founded by Christ as the Redeemer—the least among truly enlightened Christians, is greater than even John the Baptist. After this character of John, our Lord made a pointed moral application as to the value of public opinion to the teachers of

righteousness. John had come as an austere man, dwelling apart, and 'neither eating bread nor drinking wine,' and people had pronounced him mad. But the Son of man had 'come eating and drinking,' taking his part in all the conditions and amenities of social life; and then the same low, detractive tongues had changed their tale, and had said of Him, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!' He added, that although the conduct of John and himself was not understood or appreciated by that generation, yet the wise, the candid, who understood the reasons of their conduct, would approve it and do justice to it. 'Wisdom is justified of all her children.'

The other circumstance to which we have referred as occurring during our Lord's present stay at Capernaum, took place when He was dining, by special invitation, at the house of a rich Pharisee named Simon. A woman of the place, known as 'a sinner,' came in thither with an alabaster box of ointment, and, standing at his feet behind Him, weeping, 'began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head.' Here is a remarkable instance of the way in which 'sinners' are sometimes mentioned in the Gospels; coupled sometimes with publicans, as in the phrase 'publicans and sinners.' Since we know that all are sinners, it strikes us as something strange to find the term thus applied, just as we would mention a sect, or a recognised body of persons. The Pharisees, however, by no means acknowledged the fact that *they* were sinners, but limited the term to such as were or had been of notoriously bad life and conversation; while Gentiles, in the mass, were counted sinners, and indeed the worst of sinners, without any regard to their personal character. Some have hence thought that the woman was a Gentile; but this seems less likely than that she was a woman who was well known to have been lately leading an improper life.

The position this woman occupied, and the mode in which she acted, require some explanation to render them intelligible. The Jews had, in and before this age, adopted the Roman custom of reclining at meals upon a couch or dinner-bed, called

a *triclinium*, which stood in the middle of the room, with a space between it and the walls, by which the guests passed to their places, and in which the servants remained in attendance. The dinner-bed formed three sides of a square, the side nearest the door being left open, so that the servants could have access



to the dinner table, which was enclosed within the area formed by the triclinium. The guests put off their sandals as they entered, and were usually, in respectable houses, attended by servants of the host, to wash and sometimes to anoint their feet. The feet were occasionally washed without being afterwards anointed, but were never anointed without being previously washed. The guests, when placed, had their faces turned towards the table, with their feet outward or behind, towards the wall. It will thus be seen how the woman, 'standing at his feet behind,' could readily do all that she is described as doing.

It may still be asked, 'How did she gain access to the house; and especially, how to the dining-room?' It was counted a piece of hospitality, that access to a house should be unusually free, when an entertainment was given; and, in fact, many repaired to houses on such occasions, to behold the feast, in the hope either of getting a reward by contributing, through some accomplishment, to the satisfaction of the guests, or of obtaining a share of the victuals, for nothing was reserved from such entertainments; but when the guests had finished, the household satisfied their appetites, and then all that remained was given to such poor persons as might be at hand to receive it. Thus, from one cause and another, there were always many people hanging about the court, and the outer parts of the

guest-chamber, which was wholly open in front. A door is a great hindrance to admission into a room; and where that does not exist, people easily slip in.

But this was a woman! Well, we have said repeatedly that social manners were considerably less rigid among the Jews, in regard to women, than they are in the East now. It is true that women did not eat with men, at least not with strangers. But there was no objection to their being present. Both the sisters of Lazarus were present at the entertainment given by Simon the leper to Jesus and to their brother, and one of them did the very same thing to Jesus that this woman does now.

This woman was a sinner, but she was a penitent one; and from what she had heard of or from Jesus, she felt that He alone could give her comfort or relief, and she longed to make known to Him how keenly she felt the burden of her sins. In the public places, perhaps, she could not get near to Him for the crowd; or she shrank from obtruding the pollution of her presence upon Him in public, or hesitated to expose her contrite emotions to the general gaze. She therefore gladly seized the opportunity which this entertainment afforded to approach nearer to Him, in as much privacy as it was possible for her to attain. It does not seem to us that she went for the purpose of washing and anointing our Lord's feet; for when she went, she must have had every reason to suppose that this had been already done. The act was probably suggested by her perceiving that, whether from intended slight on the part of the host or not, it had been neglected. She then probably hastened home to fetch her phial of costly and fragrant oil, unless she had it already with her, which is not likely, if she had not this anointing in view when she first came; and then she proceeded to act as described. The 'alabaster box' containing the 'ointment,' or rather oil, is in the original called simply an *alabastron*, a name derived from Alabastron in Egypt, where there was a manufactory of small pots and vessels for holding perfumes, made from the stone found in the neighbouring mountains, and which was thought to conserve, better than any other substance, the qualities of the precious unguents.

The Greeks gave to these vessels the name of the town which produced them, and then to the species of stone of which they



were made, and eventually to all perfume vessels of whatever form or substance. Hence, that this woman's vessel is called an alabastron, does not make it certain that it was formed of alabaster.

Jesus, although He turned not round, was conscious of the whole proceeding. So was the master of the house, who furtively surveyed the operation, thinking within himself, whether Jesus could possibly know that the woman whom He thus allowed to approach Him, and to perform such offices, was 'a sinner.' Our Lord caught his glance, and reading all his thoughts, said to him : 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee ;' and being desired to proceed, He put the case of two debtors, one owing five hundred pence, and the other fifty, and both being forgiven by the creditor, and asked which of the two would be likely to love him most. 'I suppose,' said Simon, 'he to whom he forgave most.' Jesus told him he had rightly judged ; and then, turning to the woman, He proceeded : 'Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house [not of mine own accord, but at thy asking], and *thou* [neglectful of

becoming attention to thy guest] gavest me no WATER for my feet ; but *she* [nobly supplying thy lack of service] hath washed my feet [not with mere water, withheld by thee, but with something far more precious] with TEARS, and wiped them [not with a common napkin, but] with the hairs of her head. *Thou* gavest me no KISS [as men do when they receive a guest] ; but *this woman*, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to KISS MY FEET. My HEAD with [even common] OIL *thou* didst not anoint [as men do to the guests they wish to honour] ; but *this woman* hath anointed [not my head, but] my very FEET, with [precious] OINTMENT.' Simon doubtless by this time began to look dark ; but he looked darker still when he heard what followed : 'Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' Then, addressing the woman, He said, 'Thy sins are forgiven ;' and seeing that she seemed lost in tears of bewildering thankfulness, He added kindly, 'Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.'

Here again, as on a former occasion, the Pharisees present were smitten with wrath, and said one to another, 'Who is this that forgiveth sins also ?'

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Sixth Day.*

THE SECOND TOUR THROUGH GALILEE.

MATTHEW XII. 22—XIII. 53 ; MARK III. 31—IV. 34 ;

LUKE VIII. 1—XIII. 9.

AFTER this our Lord made another circuit through the towns and villages of Galilee, attended by the twelve apostles, and by other disciples.

It seems uncertain, till we again find Him by the shores of the sea of Galilee, whether the incidents that follow occurred in the course of this journey, or after the return to Capernaum. We must confess to some indecision on this point ; but, upon the whole, incline to the former opinion. It is not, however,

a matter of much consequence, except in so far as one feels a desire to know, as nearly as possible, where Jesus was when certain acts were performed, and certain discourses delivered.

On one occasion a very strong impression was produced upon the people, by our Lord casting out a devil from a man who had become, under this influence, not only insane, but blind and dumb. Here were three cures simultaneously effected; and when the people beheld the lunatic sensible and collected, when they heard the dumb speak, and perceived that the blind saw, they exclaimed in amazed reverence, 'Is not this the son of David?' that is, the Messiah, who was often mentioned by that title. The Pharisees, however, foiled as they had hitherto been in their arguments with Him, and in their attempts to ensnare Him, took this occasion to launch their most venomous shaft against Him. They insinuated that such miracles were performed only through power acquired by some unlawful compact with 'Beelzebub, the prince of the devils,' and that it was by the secret invocation of this powerful name that the inferior demons yielded Him obedience. Considering the state of Jewish opinion in regard to the world of spirits, and the facility with which, in consequence, such a notion might gain access to their minds, a more insidious and dangerous imputation could not have been put forth. Jesus knew this; and nothing ever said against Him drew down from Him a protest and a denunciation so warm and indignant as this charge did. He first showed its absurdity. The powers of darkness were known to be inimical to man; and yet they were thus made out to be acting against the interests of their own dominion by doing good to him. If, also, evil spirits were only cast out by the power of the devil, by whose power did *they* profess to cast them out? for, as should be known, these Pharisees made great pretensions to be themselves exorcists of evil spirits. Then, in a tone of solemn severity, He declared that it was 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost'—a sin less pardonable than any other—to ascribe to infernal power works which bore upon them the manifest impress of the divine goodness.

Still they did not desist from this charge; but having once



made it, strove to keep it in circulation, and render it effectual. They even began to tamper with the near relatives of Jesus, and succeeded for the moment in making them believe that He was not in his right mind, and that it was a duty which they owed to themselves and to society to put Him under restraint. They accordingly made an attempt to secure his person; and it perplexes one to find the mother of Jesus present on the occasion. It is, however, difficult to suppose that she had any part in the design. It is probable that she was ignorant of it, but had been prevailed upon, on some pretence or other, to join the party of relatives, who might suppose the apparent sanction of her presence desirable, or that her being with them would facilitate their object in getting Jesus apart; for to seize Him by force from among his followers and auditors was more than they could have dared. It is even possible that, knowing the design, she had gone on purpose to frustrate it.

One day our Lord had, in answer to the demand for a sign, or proof of his Messiahship, from the Pharisees, refused to give any sign but that of the prophet Jonas, obscurely shadowing forth his future resurrection; and that less for the purpose of being then understood, than of having his words remembered with conviction hereafter by his disciples. Continuing his discourse, one woman present was so impressed by his words, that she cried out, 'Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!' 'Yea, rather,' said He, 'blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.' One might almost think that this woman was conscious that the mother of Jesus was there, or close at hand; for presently it was known that she had come with other members of the family, seeking access to Him. He was then in a house, and the press of the crowd in the court prevented them from approaching Him. Soon, however, the intimation that they were present passed through the throng, and one told Jesus that his mother and brethren were without, desiring to see Him. It is not clear whether this was a message, or the information of a bystander; but it is likely to have been the former, as they

might calculate that He would come out to his mother. But He did not, being well aware of the design entertained against Him, and which must have grieved Him sorely. On the contrary, He took occasion to declare most emphatically the superior obligations of spiritual ties. 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?' And stretching forth his hand to the seeking souls around Him, and more especially to his disciples, He claimed them for his spiritual kindred, and declared that their affinity to Him was nearer than any which ties of blood could create. 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother!'

It was on this occasion that our Lord received an invitation to dinner or supper from a Pharisee, who had not evinced much open opposition to Him, or had concealed it under the mask of courtesy. He went; and the master of the house was shocked to observe that He had 'not washed' before sitting down to table. This does not prove that He had not washed at all, but it proves that He had not done so after the manner of the ceremonious washings, by which the Pharisees distinguished themselves from the 'men of the earth,' as they insolently designated the common people, who only washed when cleanliness required. This might not have been expected from Jesus as 'a man of the earth,' but they did expect it from Him as a religious teacher; for in *their* religion, the ablution before meat was a very essential article. Our Lord, perceiving the thoughts of his entertainer, was grieved once more at the hollowness of the generation in which He appeared. He spoke plainly, as was his wont, denouncing, in most stern and even vehement language, this miserable affectation of external purity, where the inside was so foul. Who does not sympathize in our Lord's indignation, at the pretensions and hypocrisies of his day? Who does not vehemently stamp with his foot, and concur in the 'Woe, woe!' which our Lord pronounced upon them? Yet let not the trumpet of *our* indignation be blown too loudly. There may be things in this city, things in this street, things in this house, things in this bosom, to prevent us

from crying out quite loudly, 'Thank God, we are not like these Pharisees.'

After this, we have an account of various discourses of our Lord, many of them taking the shape of PARABLES,—a form of discourse admirably suited to an eastern people especially, but in fact well adapted to impress the inculcated truths upon *all* minds. This mode of instruction was also well adapted to the peculiar position in which our Lord stood, and which often required Him to speak with veiled meanings, to become apparent afterward. He had to avoid such plainness of intimation, as might on one hand hasten the death He came to die, before the foundations of his church were sufficiently consolidated; or as might, on the other, excite the people to demand of Him the instant establishment of that kingdom of violence which they desired. Hence we find that, while all these parables offer, on the surface, a plain and impressive moral, they also bear a more or less covert relation to the character and growth of the religion He came to establish.

### *Thirty-sixth Week—Seventh Day.*

#### THE STORM.

MATT. VIII. 18-34; MARK IV. 35-V. 21; LUKE VIII. 22-40.

JESUS was desirous to visit the region that lay east of the southern extremity of the lake of Tiberias, and embarked with his disciples, in 'a ship,' or large boat, for that purpose. During the passage, a sudden and violent squall, such as small inland seas surrounded by mountain gorges are always exposed to, came down upon the bosom of the waters, and the vessel appeared to be in imminent peril, even in the eyes of those who had been always familiar with the lake, and had witnessed many of its storms. They were seriously alarmed. Their faith ought to have taught them that they were safe while in the same ship with their Master. They had not this faith; but they had faith enough to know that He was their only refuge in this distress. And where was He? Fatigued with the

labours of the day, He had withdrawn to the hinder part of the vessel, and composed himself to sleep ; and He slept so soundly, that all this turmoil and terror did not arouse Him. It is probable that they did not for a time like to disturb his rest ; but at length their alarm became so intense, that they aroused Him, with exclamations significantly expressive of urgency and agitation : ‘ Master, carest Thou not that we perish !’ O foolish disciples, to think that *He* could perish thus at misadventure (for they doubtless meant to include Him in their ‘we’), or that they could perish while He was there ! This struck their Lord’s attention more than the storm ; and He said, ‘ Why are ye so fearful ?—how is it that ye have no faith ?’ And then He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘ Peace, be still !’ At these words the wind fell at once, and immediately ‘ there was a great calm.’ The quiet and simple recital of the evangelists more effectually realizes this scene, and ‘ dilates the strong conception’ of this sublime transaction, than any garniture of words in prose or verse could do. Nothing comes near it but that one other instance which the commencement of the sacred volume supplies : ‘ And He said, Light be ; and light was.’ And the analogy of the two examples is nearer than might at first appear ; for He who now rebukes the wind, is He ‘ by whom also God made the worlds,’—He, ‘ without whom was not anything made that was made.’

Upon landing at the other side of the lake, they had an extraordinary reception from a most furious demoniac,<sup>1</sup> who had his dwelling among the tombs. It is to be remarked that there are in this part of the country, and especially near the ruins of the city of Gadara, from which the district took its name, still to be seen numerous old sepulchres hewn in the sides of the hills, some of which are occupied as residences by poor families. These places of tombs, being outside the towns, and being

<sup>1</sup> Matthew intimates that there were two ; but Mark and Luke name only one—showing, seemingly, that the case of one of them was so much less remarkable than that of the other, as to fall into the background in the narrative.

avoided by the Jews, for fear of contracting pollution from contact with human bones, formed secluded retreats, acceptable to those who, from demoniacal possession, madness, crime, or other causes, shunned the society of men. These things still happen ; and the anecdote given below,<sup>1</sup> from Mr. Warburton's *Crescent and Cross*, bears very much on the case before us. The demoniac who encountered our Lord is likewise expressly stated by Matthew to have been so dangerous to passers-by, that the neighbourhood of his haunt was shunned. He also, like the maniac mentioned by Warburton, was naked ; for although it had often been attempted to make him wear clothes, he speedily released himself from the encumbrance, by rending off whatever was put upon his person. There is a kind of mania in which this propensity is often manifested ; and we remember to have been much astonished when we first, in the East, observed a man in this condition moving about freely in the streets and market-places, without attracting much notice. On inquiry, we learned that he was a maniac, and had so often destroyed the clothing put upon him, that all attempts to dress him had been abandoned.

But why was the Gadarene demoniac not under restraint ? The reason is given : ' No man could bind him, no, not with chains.' For when the demoniacal paroxysm was on him, he became endued with tremendous strength, so that he easily rent his chains asunder. This is nowise incredible ; for there are still some forms of mania, in which the sufferer, notwithstanding the constant exhaustion of mind and body, gains a daily increase of muscular strength, and is able to break the strongest bonds, and even chains. Moreover, this wretched man often vented vengefully upon his own person the irritation

<sup>1</sup> ' On descending from the heights [of Lebanon], I found myself in a cemetery, whose sculptured turbans showed that the neighbouring village was Moslem. The silence of the night was now broken by *fierce yells and howlings*, which I discovered proceeded from a *naked maniac*, who was fighting with some wild dogs for a bone. The moment he perceived me he left his canine comrades, and bounding along with rapid strides, seized my horse's bridle, and almost forced him backward over the cliff, by the grip he held of the powerful Mameluke bit.'

of his perturbed spirit, 'crying, and cutting himself with stones;' which also finds a parallel in some cases of insanity, as in an instance of raving madness mentioned by the late Dr. Pritchard, in which the patient 'habitually wounded his hands, wrists, and arms, with needles and pins. . . . The blood sometimes flowed copiously, dropping from his elbows when his arms were bare.' It would therefore seem that this instance of demoniacal possession took the form of the most outrageous lunacy; or rather, perhaps, concentrated in one case *all* the most outrageous manifestations of different kinds of raving madness.

And what brings this fierce man, leaping and bounding over the hills, to meet the Saviour? Does he mean to molest Him, as he did other travellers? No. Impelled by the power within him, 'he ran and worshipped Him;' and with his voice the demon cried, 'What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not.' It is clear from this language that the demon knew what he had to expect, and hoped by servile entreaty to mitigate his doom. In answer to a question, he said his name was Legion, 'for we are many,' and implored that he might not be sent out of the country,—a request that may seem as suitable for the man himself as for the demon; but that the latter is meant, appears by the additional request not to be sent 'into *the deep*.' This term does not here mean *the sea*, but 'the abyss' (as in the original)—hell, the place of spirits. It was an opinion that the demons had great objections to be there, and much preferred to wander about. But it was held that they could only do so within the vehicle of some body, human or animal, divested of which they returned to the abyss. To avert this, the demons implored permission to enter a herd of swine that was feeding near, knowing that it would be in vain to ask leave to enter into any other man, or into any lawful beast of the country. Leave was given; and forthwith the demons quitted the man, and dispersed themselves into the herd of swine, which, upon this unwonted invasion, fled, with cries of terror, down the steep into the sea.

When the people of the neighbouring villages heard of these

proceedings, they hastened to meet Jesus, and beheld the lately terrible demoniac, from whose presence they had been used to flee, sitting at the feet of Jesus, 'clothed, and in his right mind.' It is likely that the one-sided report of the swineherds, in justifying themselves to the owners of the swine, had filled the latter with hostile intentions against Jesus for the loss they had sustained. But when they came to the spot, and saw the demoniac thus quiet as a child, 'they were afraid' to molest Him, or even to speak reproachfully to Him; still, apprehensive of further loss if He remained there, they implored Him to quit the country. And He, thus inhospitably received—thus rejected—yielded to their wish, and returned, wet and hungry, to the boat.

After all, some have said, this was a loss to these Gadarenes; and on what principle can we justify its infliction? As to the loss, it might be deemed sufficiently made up to them by their being rid of so great a nuisance as the demoniac, more terrible than any beast of prey; and they ought to have reckoned the benefit to this poor man not too dearly purchased at the cost of their swine. In fact, all thought of their loss should have been overwhelmed in astonishment at this great miracle. But they were a hoggish people, and their thoughts were of hogs. The inhabitants of this quarter were for the most part heathens, with some Jewish people among them. The swine, therefore, belonged either to the one or the other. To Jews the hog with other animals had, by the law, been made unclean—that is, unfit for food; and since the time when Antiochus, in his oppression of the Jews, had made the eating of swine's flesh a test and symbol of enforced rejection of the law, and of conformity to idolatry, the hog had become detestable beyond all beasts, and the keeping of it, or having anything to do with it, unlawful. If, therefore, these swine belonged to Jews, they were rightly punished for their infraction of what had been the law and custom of their country. The heathen, on their part, aware of this Jewish antipathy to hogs, were much in the habit of insulting and worrying them, not only by oral and written allusions to the subject, which was indeed a standing jest

against the Jews, but by obtruding hogs and pork upon their notice. If, therefore, the herds belonged to the heathen, there is much ground to suspect that their obtrusive preference for rearing hogs had its root in a desire to annoy their Jewish neighbours, who could not, without disgust and irritation, behold the unclean beast flourishing thus largely on the borders of their Holy Land. In that case, their malignancy deserved the punishment of this loss. They deserved to be wounded in their tenderest part—their hogs.

But more than this. Jesus knew that a time would come when men would question the fact of demoniacal possession, and say that the poor lunatics *thought* they were possessed of devils, and that He merely humoured them in this delusion. May He not, therefore, have had a special and important motive in leaving this evidence for the reality of such possessions,—evidence so strong, that even those who entertain the view at which we have hinted, acknowledgè the obstruction to it which this instance offers? For, granting that men might labour under such a delusion, how, as a delusion, could it act upon hogs, and not upon one merely, but simultaneously upon a large number? The reality of *their* possession is avouched by the result, as taken with the antecedent circumstances; and that it was not in their case a delusion, is clear from the unideal character of the hoggish mind, which we may conclude had never been disturbed by notions about evil spirits and demoniacal possessions. Upon the whole, we imagine that it would have been difficult, from the very nature of the case, to provide any single piece of evidence for the reality of demoniacal possessions more conclusive than is in this instance furnished, especially as the presence of the swineherds, interested in the preservation of the hogs, and accountable to the owners for them, shows that there could not possibly have been any foul play in the case, by worrying or frightening the beasts through any more tangible agency than that of evil spirits.



## Thirty-seventh Week—First Day.

THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL.—MATTHEW XIII. 44—46.

AMONG the seven parables which our Lord delivered about this time, there are two remarkably similar to each other in their general purport, but distinguished by some differences.

The first is that of the man finding a hidden treasure in a field, and then going with joy to sell all that he had, in order to purchase the field, that it might become all his own ; the other, that of a merchant travelling in search of precious stones, who, when he has met with one pearl of surpassing value—'a pearl of great price'—goes and sells all he has, all his previous acquisitions, in order to obtain it. The general similarity between the two parables is evident, and both are founded on circumstances of frequent occurrence in eastern life.

Thus, as to the treasure : owing to the insecurity of property in the East, from war and oppression, joined to the necessity of keeping valuable property in hand, for want of secure banks of deposit, the practice of hiding precious utensils and ornaments, money and jewels, has always been common in the East. Often these are built up into the walls of the owner's house, often buried in fields and gardens. The latter is usually the resort in cases of instant emergency, such as the approach of an enemy ; for any recent operation in the wall might be disclosed by the difference in the state of the plaster, whereas any recent disturbance of the soil is less easily detected, from the greater extent of space, and from its being easier to obliterate the traces of the operation ; though we have heard of soldiers, on taking possession of a town, diligently employing themselves in watering the gardens of the citizens, for the purpose of observing where the water sank most freely in, supplying the inference that the soil had there been recently loosened.

It often happens that the owner is killed, and takes his secret with him ; often that ' he dies, and makes no sign ;' often that he goes away, and returns no more. Hence the soil and the buildings upon it contain great quantities of treasure, thus concealed in past times. This is well known, and is in fact often evinced by the accidental discovery of such hid treasure, frequently by poor peasants when engaged in the labours of the field. It is this which makes the Orientals regard European travellers, exploring ancient sites and ruins, as engaged in treasure-seeking. Treasure-finding, indeed, occurs with sufficient frequency to exercise a distinct and strong influence upon the character of the people, who, in the depths of their misery and destitution, live in the feeling that they may at any time, ' if God sees fit,' be in this way suddenly raised to a state of affluence.

The occupation of a travelling jeweller is still common in the East. He deals in precious stones and pearls, and travels widely in search of opportunities of making advantageous purchases or exchanges. In the course of these operations, it will sometimes happen that he meets with some rare and costly gem, for the sake of securing which he disposes of all his existing stock, and every article of valuable property he possesses, to raise the purchase-money.

Both these parables, and the whole series of seven to which they belong, are introduced by the formula, ' The kingdom of heaven is like unto.' It is therefore quite clear that they involve an inner and spiritual meaning ; as is, indeed, further shown by the explanation which our Lord himself gave of the first of the series—that of the Sower.

The general meaning of the two to which we call attention is evident on the very surface : that the gospel—salvation in and through Christ, the offer of eternal life—is the greatest and most inestimable blessing that man can find, to secure which is well worthy the sacrifice of all that he before possessed or counted precious.

The only essential difference between the two, is in the respective states of the men who find this rich possession.

The first finds the treasure unexpectedly, when he thinks not of it, nor is indeed aware of its existence. This is the case of those who have not felt that man's life has higher aims and objects than earth can offer—that there is a priceless truth for them, not taught in the world nor learned in books. But God has by his Spirit made them 'willing,' has opened their hearts to receive that which He designs to impart to them ; and when the treasures of the gospel are suddenly opened up, they are astonished by the splendour, and impressed with the surpassing worth ; and they feel ready to give up all that they have been accustomed to prize or value, 'that they may win Christ, and be found in Him.' And this they do, not grudgingly nor of necessity, nor as striking a nice balance of loss and gain, but 'with joy,' as is emphatically noted in the case of the man who found the treasure hid in the field : with joy, because

'All the vain splendour that the world admires,'

its goods, its pleasures, its hopes, which before satisfied, or seemed to satisfy, the heart, have lost all relative value in their eyes, even as the lamp ceases to be of much account when the sun shines ; or even as the man who has stored himself with copper or brass, disburdens himself of it quickly when he discovers 'the vein of silver,' or comes to 'the place of gold.'

But the merchant was of another sort. He had distinctly set before his eyes the object of seeking goodly pearls.

He is of those who are left unsatisfied by all that the world can give, and by all that systems teach. He is convinced that there is something better and brighter which he has not reached—some great truth which he has not learned, and which must, when found, be more effectual than aught he has yet attained, to fill, and save, and sanctify the soul. So urged by an inward impulse—which is itself from God—he seeks diligently for that essential truth, that absolute good for the sons of men, which he knows must exist, and which he feels that he must find or perish. He travels far in pursuit of it ; and in the way he gathers many precious things—precious to him in his actual state, because they encourage his pursuit by affording some

glimmering rays caught from the priceless gem he seeks. But he knows that not these, separately or together, are the PEARL of his desire, for they do not satisfy his wants: they leave him still craving for something more and better, to fill entirely the void within. But when at last he has caught view of Christ, in all the glory of his grace and goodness, in all the fulness of his salvation, he knows he has found the real object of his researches—the fruition of all his aspirations. It is the PEARL of great price. He knows well its value. He has sought it too long, he has been harassed too often by glittering substitutes, not to know that he has now found that which alone can make life a gladness to him, by giving rest to his soul. His search is ended. The PEARL is found. And he feels that rather than not win it—rather than lose it when won—he could gladly give his body to be burned, and his goods to feed the poor, and cast all his old systems and fine fancies to the moles and to the bats.

Many are kept from seeking Christ, by an apprehension of the terrible difficulty of that self-annulment which the coming to Him involves, and which is signified by the leaving all to follow Him—the selling all to purchase the treasure-field and the pearl. But this is the conception of those who have *not* come. To come to Him is to love Him; and where there is love, this self-annulment is easy: for although adverse and bitter to the unloving, it is most congenial to the loving nature. If it were possible for the unloving to take Christ's yoke and bear his burden, that yoke would be hard and the burden heavy; it is love that makes his yoke easy, and his burden light.

### Thirty-seventh Week—Second Day.

MIRACLES AND MURDER.

MATTHEW IX. 18—X. 42, XIV. 6—12; MARK V. 22—VI. 29;

LUKE VIII. 41—IX. 9.

No sooner had our Lord landed on the other side of the lake, than He received an urgent application from Jairus, the ruler

of the synagogue at Capernaum, who fell at his feet, imploring Him to come to his only daughter, twelve years of age, who was then at the point of death. He went ; and as He went, the press of the crowd around Him was very great. In that crowd there was a woman, who had for twelve years suffered under a grievous disease which exhausted both her blood and her money, for she had spent all her substance in seeking the help of physicians who could give her no relief, and she remained most poor in mind and estate. She could not, however, abandon all hope of cure. She believed that Jesus could heal her ; but the peculiar nature of her disease rendered her unwilling to make an open application to Him, in the presence of the crowd by which He was usually surrounded. She thought it might be possible to steal a cure. Her faith in his power to heal was such, that she believed it would suffice, could she but touch Him unobserved. In that crowd she managed to come behind Him, and touch the border of his garment ; and no sooner had she done so, than she felt that she was cured. At that moment, Jesus asked who had touched Him. All denied having done so ; but Peter remarked on the strangeness of the question, seeing how great was the pressure of the crowd around. Jesus explained that some one had touched Him *with* a purpose, for He felt 'that virtue (to heal) had gone out of Him.' On hearing this, the poor woman cast herself trembling at his feet, declaring all that had happened to her. The strong faith which she had in this peculiar manner shown, was pleasing to our Lord, who spoke kindly and encouragingly to her : ' Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace.' Her 'faith' had cured her ; the 'virtue' which went forth from Christ had made her whole. If she had not had faith, his virtue would have availed her nothing ; if He had not had the 'virtue,' her 'faith' would not have borne this fruit. There was thus a reciprocal action between the faith of the patient and the virtue of the Healer ; such exactly as takes place when we come to Him to be healed of our spiritual diseases. His virtue to heal is always the same ; but to bring it out, to make it applicable to our wants, we must bring the

faith which can alone put us into the requisite relation to Him. Without this, his virtue remains in himself: it passes not to us; it is to us as if it were not. Many touch Christ in the press; but unless they touch Him *with a purpose*, the purpose of faith to be healed by the virtue that goes out of Him, it avails them not at all.

Jairus, who kept close to our Lord, had doubtless been fretting at this interruption of his progress, where the alternative of life or death seemed to hang upon a moment's time. His worst fears seemed accomplished when a messenger came from the house to tell him, that he need give 'the Master' no further trouble, for the girl was dead. Pitying his evident distress, Jesus said to him, 'Be not afraid, only believe;' and instead of turning back, He went on. He suffered but three of the apostles to enter the house with Him. These were Peter, James, and John—the same three who were subsequently allowed on more than one occasion to witness things hidden from the rest. On entering, He found that the death clamour, the bitter wail of the real and the hired mourners, had been raised; and when Jesus said, 'Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth,' they derided the assertion, which they misunderstood, 'knowing that she was dead.' This assurance on their part is important, for some have contended that she was not dead in fact, but only in a swoon. Seeing the frame of mind they were in was unfit for the deep solemnity before Him, and that their presence with their clamorous grief was altogether most unfit, He sent them all away. The house was now quiet, and Jesus proceeded to the chamber of death, attended by the three disciples, and by the father and mother of the child. It was a solemn moment as they stood around that rose, fragrant with blessings, which death had cropt so soon. Jesus took the maiden by the hand, and called to her, 'TALITHA CUMI,' words which signify, 'Maiden, arise.' And at the touch of that hand, at the call of that voice, her spirit came again; and she arose and left the bed on which she had lain, walking down the room. Jesus told the parents to give her some nourishment, thus recalling

them from their ecstasy of trembling joy and gratitude, to the actual proof that she had indeed returned to the realities of mortal life, and needed its sustainments. Probably she had not taken any food for a long while before she died; and to her parents it must have been no small delight, to watch her receiving her victuals with the keen relish and eager appetite of vigorous health.

Our Lord charged those present not to promulgate this great miracle. This injunction He gave on other occasions; but it seems to have been invariably disregarded by the persons benefited, who felt that their gratitude must have a voice.

As Jesus went hence, two blind men followed him, crying as they went, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us!' He did not turn to them, but let them follow Him along the street till He had reached his house. They then came to Him, and He asked them pointedly if they believed that He was able to do this; thus again, as time advanced, more and more distinctly demanding faith as the condition of cure. On their answer, 'Yea, Lord,' He touched their eyes; and though He did not say 'Be opened,' He still made the effect dependent on their faith: '*According to your faith*, be it unto you.' And their faith was good faith, for their eyes were opened. This is the first case particularly mentioned of his giving sight to the blind; and it is distinguished from most of the other cases, by the fact that the cure was effected by touch alone. To help the faith of those who were to be restored to sight, He usually employed other instrumentality in applying his power of healing—the simple moisture of the mouth, or clay mixed with it. There is only one instance of a blind man being healed by a simple word from Jesus. The reason probably was, that the blind being incapable of receiving visual impressions by which their faith might be assisted, were, in gracious condescension to their infirmity, to be aided by the sense of touch, which they could best apprehend. And even so are men still variously dealt with. The strong in faith have their faith tried; the weak in faith have their faith strengthened. Thus it is always.

The cure which immediately followed—namely, that of a

dumb man possessed with a devil—is chiefly distinguished from others of the same kind by the remark of the people, that ‘it was never so seen in Israel;’ and by the attempt of the Pharisees to revive, in connection with it, the stupid and atrocious calumny, to which they had given vent when a similar miracle was performed: ‘He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.’ It strikes one with some surprise to see this charge specially associated with *this* form of miracle. In the former case the man was *blind* and *dumb*; in this, *dumb*. It occurs to us that, as is usually the case, the persons were not only dumb, but deaf. As, therefore, the person could not physically hear with his own ears the words of ejection addressed to the possessing demon who used and acted through his organs, this was considered as the most difficult or incurable species of possession, beyond the reach or pretension of the popular exorcists, who therefore declared dispossession to be in such cases impossible but through some diabolical compact or influence. This interpretation of the matter is confirmed by the fact, that the disciples, in our Lord’s absence upon the Mount of Transfiguration, attempted in vain to cast out a spirit possessing a lad who had been deaf and dumb from a child. And when they asked Him the cause of their failure, He said, primarily because of their unbelief; but He added, ‘Howbeit, *this kind* goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.’ It was probably their preconceived sense of the difficulty of the case, which prevented them from exercising the faith requisite to effect the miracle.

Our Lord now deemed it fit, that those who were hereafter to carry on his work on earth should learn to act without his personal presence; and that through them the gospel of the kingdom should be more extensively proclaimed by their dispersed and separate proceedings than it could be otherwise. The deeper mysteries of that kingdom they did not themselves know, till they afterwards viewed it as a completed whole; and these, therefore, they could not teach. What they did teach, or rather proclaim, was however a step in advance of John’s teaching. He had preached, ‘Repent, for the kingdom



of heaven *is at hand.*' They preached, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God *is come,*' 'Repent and believe the gospel;' and on this text they doubtless amplified in their addresses, speaking of their Lord, what He had done, and what they had heard Him say, and declaring their belief that He was the long-desired, long-expected Christ of God.

They were also empowered to authenticate their mission by miracles. In performing these, they no doubt acted vicariously, as in later times, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and in the brief account of their proceedings, the curious circumstance transpires, that 'they *anointed with oil* many that were sick, and healed them.' Jesus never did this; and as anointing the sick with oil was a common practice among the Jews, it must have helped to give a kind of secondary aspect to their proceedings. Whether they acted thus from a modest reluctance to seem to emulate their Master in this respect, or whether defective faith rendered such help necessary to themselves, cannot be determined.

Jesus sent them not forth uninstructed in the course they were to take, and the duties they had to discharge. They were to limit their movements to the Jewish districts, not going among the Samaritans or the Gentiles; for it was necessary that this gospel of the kingdom should be first of all fully preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He taught them that they were to go forth to the discharge of their office without any anxious care for the future. They were going forth on God's work, and they might rely upon it that God would provide for all their wants; and in every place to which they came, they were to accept the first hospitality that offered, without seeking better, or moving from house to house. And having thus attached themselves to one household, *that* would become the centre of operations to them. They were not to expect all things to go smoothly. Much persecution and many trials awaited them; and very often the word they taught would seem a word of strife and division in families. But their mission and their safety were in God's keeping. He would protect them; He would vindicate their cause; and whatever came

to pass, they had this comfort: 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father, which is in heaven.'

How long they were away, we know not. But when they returned, they seem to have been satisfied with their success, or with the attention with which their message had been heard, while they gratefully acknowledged that, in following their Lord's instructions, they had lacked nothing.

In the meantime, by his own acts and preachings, and by theirs, the fame of Jesus was made familiar to all wide Galilee; and his proceedings and claims became the general theme of conversation. There was an extraordinary variety of opinions concerning Him. His conduct was so different from that which the nation generally had associated with the idea of the Messiah, that there were not many as yet who fully recognised Him in that character. Some thought He might be John the Baptist raised from the dead; for John had been ere this put to death by Herod. Others deemed that He might be Elias, or one of the old prophets come as a further harbinger of the Messiah; and the general disposition, among those well informed as to John's preaching and mission, was to place Him above John, and next to the Messiah, but not to regard Him as himself the Messiah. This indeed is the opinion which we have supposed John himself to have been for a moment inclined to entertain, when he sent his disciples to question Jesus.

All these opinions were discussed at court, for Jesus was now too conspicuous to be overlooked there. Herod himself said, 'John have I beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things?'—and he expressed a wish to see Him.

John had met his end in this manner:—We have seen that it was not Herod's intention to put him to death, partly because he was afraid to do so. But his more wicked and less scrupulous wife thirsted for the prophet's blood, not only out of revenge, but as a measure of prudence and security to herself. The mere fact that he was there as a prisoner, must ever keep alive in the minds of the people, and that of the king himself,

for what cause he was there—for declaring the marriage between Herod and Herodias unlawful and void ; and who could say but that at any moment of discontent or remorse, or to gratify the people, with whom the marriage was unpopular and scandalous, the king might send her away from him? She had tried her influence upon Herod often enough, to know that it was useless to attempt to gain his consent to this murder in any direct way ; and she therefore laid a deep plot to extort that consent unwillingly from him.

It was his birth-day, which was celebrated with high festivities



at court. The Jews generally disliked the celebration of birth-days ; and this was one of the heathen customs which the Herodian family had adopted from the Romans. On the present occasion, Herod gave a great 'supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates ;' and before it closed, a fair young girl, to whom Herod was greatly attached, was introduced, and

commenced one of those solo dances for which the East has long been celebrated. That fair child was Salome, the daughter of Herodias by her former husband. With such marvellous grace and thrilling effect did she perform this dance, that Herod, already warm with wine, became excited, and in the fervour of his enthusiasm vowed that she should have whatever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom. Little could he imagine what this child had been tutored by her wicked mother to ask; and he was shocked and grieved when, instead of some costly bauble, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. The sternest man there must have shuddered to hear from those beautiful young lips the bloodthirsty request, so atrociously specific: 'Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.' John is not only to lose his head, but the bleeding trophy is to be brought to her—it is to be brought to her *there*, that there may be no evasion—that the high lords, who have, heard the vow, may witness its fulfilment. Then she tells *how* it is to be brought. Not in any careless way, not held by the hair, not in a napkin, but in a dish; so that she—that young girl—may receive it into her own hands, and take it whither she pleased, without danger of soiling her rich dress with a prophet's blood. This is frightful. It was done, nevertheless. His oath having been given, false pride prevented Herod from revoking it, notwithstanding his regret, and notwithstanding he must have felt that the infraction of such an oath was a far less crime than its fulfilment, and although he must have seen very well to whose diabolical machinations this entanglement was owing. A man was sent to behead John in his prison; and presently the head was brought to the young princess, who doubtless received it with becoming grace, and bore it off daintily to her mother. That the girl could go through all this, however well tutored, seems to show that Salome was indeed a true daughter of Herodias. How she received this precious gift we are not told; but there is an old tradition, that she drew forth the still warm tongue that had rebuked her crimes, and vengefully transfixed it with her bodkin.

*Thirty-seventh Week—Third Day.*

## THE CRISIS.

MATT. XIV. 13-36; MARK VI. 30-56; LUKE IX. 10-17; JOHN VI.

THE excitement among the people concerning Jesus was very high when the apostles returned to Capernaum; and it was so much increased by their reappearance, that it was impossible for them to obtain in the city the rest and repose which were greatly needed. Mark says, 'There were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.' It was perhaps expected that, being now joined by his chief disciples, Jesus would no longer hesitate to declare himself the Messiah—such a Messiah as they wanted. The passover was at hand, when they were all going to Jerusalem; and they seem to have calculated that, availing himself of the occasion, He would place himself at their head as king, and lead on the pilgrim host, increasing as it went, to the holy city, to expel the Romans and take possession of David's throne.

Seeing that no rest was to be had in the city, Jesus proposed to seek it at some quiet spot in the wilderness. It is doubted whether this was on the other side of the lake, or on the same side, across a bay. Jesus went by water; and the fact that the crowd was able in a short time, and without apparent obstruction, to reach the same place by land, is in favour of the latter conclusion; as the upper Jordan (which in the other case must have been crossed by them) is, as well as the lower, in flood, and unfordable, at and about the time of the passover.

Finding his retreat thus intruded upon by the multitude, Jesus no longer avoided them, but proceeded to preach to them, and to heal such among them as were diseased. Thus the hours passed, and it grew towards evening, when the want of needful food for this multitude became obvious and pressing. They had not taken any since they left home; and in their haste and excitement they had not brought any with them.

None could be had in that desert place ; or, if a town had been sufficiently near (as perhaps Bethsaida may have been), it could hardly have met the sudden demands of five thousand people, not counting women and children.

Under these circumstances, Jesus said to Philip, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' Some think that He addressed Philip in particular, because the charge of providing food was entrusted to him. But the evangelist says it was 'to prove him ;' our Lord having already predetermined what to do. He had doubtless perceived in this disciple a disposition to rest on lower views, a certain heaviness in elevating himself to higher and more spiritual things. This is seen not only in his reply here, but in the only other words ascribed to him in the Gospels, in which his spiritual inapprehensiveness is as painfully evinced.<sup>1</sup> The trial seems to have been in this—that Jesus meant by his question to suggest to his mind the idea of miraculous relief. It is likely that some of the apostles, if they had been asked the question, would have answered, that He, who had raised the dead, could doubtless supply this want. However, Philip took the lowest possible view of the exigency. He did not even think of the difficulty of obtaining bread on any terms in that place. He thought only of the large sum it would cost—a sum far beyond their means—to purchase even so much bread as would furnish a morsel to each. He exclaimed with astonishment, that 'two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little ;' clearly implying that, among all of them, or rather in the common purse, so much money was not to be found.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew, falling into the same low view, observed there was a lad there from whom five barley loaves and two small fishes

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 8. '*Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*' Observe also our Lord's reply : 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ?'

<sup>2</sup> The coin unhappily rendered a 'penny' in the authorized version was the Roman denarius, equal to 7½d. of our money ; so that the whole sum Philip had in view was above six pounds.

might be obtained : ' But,' he added, ' what are they among so many ?'

Jesus, however, directed the apostles to make the people sit down in an orderly manner upon the green grass. He then took the loaves and fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. This custom was not peculiar to Jesus, but common among the Jews at their meals. It was indeed held by them, that ' he who partakes of anything without giving thanks, acts as if he were stealing it from God !' The prayer of thanks was always pronounced by the father of the family ; and Jesus never neglected it.

Having thus blessed the loaves and fishes, He brake them, and gave the portions to the disciples, who distributed them to the multitude ; and there was enough for all the five thousand out of these five loaves and two small fishes. There was indeed more than enough. When the remains of this humble but ample feast were gathered, they filled twelve baskets ; so that, in fact, there was more at the end than at the beginning.

The people were charmed by this miracle ; and it raised to the highest pitch their enthusiasm in behalf of the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. Might not this, indeed, be taken as the commencement of his reign ? Hitherto his acts had been those of individual beneficence. But here was a public act, performed in the sight of thousands, and of which thousands had shared the benefit. Who so fit to be their king as He who could banish want and labour from their borders, and revive the good old times when their fathers were fed by bread from heaven ? Perceiving the dangerous tendency of this strong excitement, and that they were likely to compel Him to go with them, and to proclaim Him king of Israel without his consent, our Lord directed the disciples to get off to their boat, and return across the lake. Seeing that Jesus remained behind, the people did not oppose this movement ; and it being too late for them to return by land, they dispersed themselves among the villages, or remained in the open air, expecting to find Jesus among them in the morning.

But He remained behind, and retired to a mountain, where

He enjoyed one of those opportunities of solitary prayer which He valued greatly, and of which He had of late been much deprived.

The disciples seem to have waited for some time off the shore, in the expectation that Jesus would join them ; but finding that He did not come, and supposing that He had gone round by land, they commenced their voyage. A storm then arose, which still further retarded their progress, by compelling them to lower their sails and take to their oars. From these causes they were, by the early morning (at five or six o'clock), still far from their destination.

From the place of his solitude, Jesus could observe the storm on the lake ; and reflecting upon the embarrassment of his disciples, He hastened to their assistance. Walking upon the sea by the same power with which He rules over nature, He approached their vessel. The disciples were greatly alarmed. What they beheld was entirely unusual, and beyond all experience ; and although they could see the figure was that of Jesus, they thought it was rather his ghost than himself. But in haste to reassure them, He called out, ' It is I : be not afraid ;' and they knew that, if it were He, they had nothing to fear. Peter, ever impulsive, and prompted by that love which made him always desire to be where his Lord was, cried out, ' Since it is Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.' What need ? Only the need of a strong and deep spirit, which was apt to feel, and felt at that moment, a craving to signalize the strength of its devoted attachment by some act of hardy affiance to the sovereign object of its trust. Yet there was presumption in it, as appeared by the result ; and in the quick collapse of his high spirit on the present occasion, we witness a foreshadowing of Peter's greater fall. Jesus told him that he might come ; and he went. But when he got upon the water, and not only saw but felt the boisterous waves, his heart failed him, and he began to fear that he should perish. No sooner did he begin to think that he should sink, than he did begin to sink ; but his Lord had pity upon him ; and in answer to his cry, ' Lord, save me,' held out his hand to save and to sustain him, with the gentle



rebuke, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' He had not erred in thinking that he might in safety walk the waters, when his Lord bade him come, and when he had faith to go. But a doubt is too heavy for any one to carry who would walk the waters; and Peter's doubt would have sunk him into the deep, but that the Lord had mercy upon him.

Meanwhile the people on the other side of the lake vainly sought Jesus there in the morning. Not being able to find Him, and knowing that there had been no other boat than that in which the disciples embarked, they concluded that He must have gone round by land, and conceived that if they could cross by water, they should reach the opposite shore before Him, and thus meet Him on his arrival. So, as by this time boats had come over from the opposite towns, many of the more ardent persons took passage in them.

When they arrived, they heard with amazement that Jesus was already come, and had gone to the synagogue. Thither they followed Him, and questioned Him concerning his arrival; but not satisfying their curiosity, nor acquainting them with the miracle by which his glory had been further manifested, He at once referred to the real grounds of that disposition which had led them to seek Him. 'Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.' The people stood there ready—with the exception of the Pharisees—to receive his declarations, to acknowledge his claim, to hail Him king; and He on his part was resolved to speak out too plainly to be misunderstood as to the real nature of his kingdom, and by dashing their terrestrial hopes, once and for ever, to relieve himself from the grief and embarrassment which such misunderstanding of his purposes occasioned. Taking, as it were, his text from what had just transpired, He proceeded to show that the nourishment He had to offer was not of this world; it was nourishment for the soul. It was of Him, and in Him, and through Him; and none but those who, by the appropriating appetite of faith, made this nourishment their own, could hope for enduring life, however high their pretensions and privileges. In declaring that 'He was the bread

that came down from heaven,' that 'the bread which He gave was his flesh,' which He 'gave for the life of the world,' He touched upon the higher mysteries of the atonement, which they could then only imperfectly understand ; but the discourse, as a whole, was a perfectly intelligible death-blow to the temporal views and hopes of the people. Its calm and purely spiritual tone grated harshly upon their present excited feeling, *because it was spiritual*; and as spiritual, it contained much at which Jewish pride, and the pride of human intellect, might take offence. Never was any discourse delivered by Jesus, the effect of which was more marked and signal. Many even of his disciples could not relish it, but were offended by it, and left Him. The desertion was so general, that He who that day might have mounted a throne amid the acclamations of assembled thousands, was, before its close, left almost, if not quite alone, with his chosen few—the apostles. To them He said, 'Will ye also go away?' And the question drew from the true-hearted Peter the glorious declaration: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, AND ARE SURE, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.'

### Thirty-seventh Week—Fourth Day.

#### TRIALS OF FAITH.

MATTHEW XV. 21—XVI. 12 ; MARK VII. 24—VIII. 26.

It has been seen that the Passover, being the third since the commencement of our Lord's ministry, was close at hand at the time of the recent transactions. But Jesus did not go to Jerusalem at *this* Passover. The reason why He did not think it proper to proceed to Judea, but remained in Galilee, even till the autumnal Feast of Tabernacles, was that 'the Jews sought to kill Him.' The ruling Jewish authorities at Jerusalem had definitively concluded to take advantage of his expected visit to the city at this Passover, to accomplish his

destruction ; and as Jesus saw that absence presented the only *natural* means of prolonging his ministry to its due period, He postponed the lesser to the greater obligation.

Even in Galilee He seems rather to have shunned observation ; and we find Him appearing, at various times, in the remote and less populous parts of the country. He had heard, doubtless, that Herod's attention had been drawn towards Him, which, if He moved about with crowds attending his steps, might render Galilee as unsafe to Him as Judea had already become ; and there was still reason to apprehend, that in some moment of excited enthusiasm the people might take up their former intention of setting Him at the head of a popular insurrection,—a danger He seems to have dreaded more than any other : for although this could not eventually frustrate the purpose which He came to accomplish, it might have left a stain or a suspicion upon his name and objects, of which the enemies of his cause in all ages would not have failed to take advantage.

Thus we find Him farther to the west than, as far as we know, He had yet been—even at the borders of Phœnicia. He reached a place where he wished to remain unknown, and ‘entered into a house’ there with his disciples. ‘But He could not be hid.’ The fame of Him penetrating into heathendom, had reached this remote quarter. A woman of the country learned that He had come into these parts ; and having a daughter who was a demoniac, she would not be deterred by the consideration that He was a Jew, and she a heathen, from seeking his assistance. She sought the place where He dwelt, and seems to have applied in the first instance to the apostles to be admitted to their Master ; and on being repulsed by them, as one not entitled to any share in the blessings He could confer—for, to them, the idea of any but Jews participating in these blessings was distasteful—she determined to await his coming forth. When she beheld Him, she cast herself at his feet, imploring Him to heal her daughter. ‘But He answered her not a word.’ This was doubtless in part to try her faith, as in the case of the two blind men, who had

in like manner been at first unheeded ; and seeing that his personal mission was to the house of Israel only, and the great commission of the gospel to the heathen was not to be opened till after his ascension, it seems to have been expected by Him, that the most signal faith should be manifested to enable Him to infringe this rule of his own conduct ; and it would be still more needed to explain and justify this in the eyes even of his own disciples, who had deep prejudices on the point, and to whom, as well as to others, it was very desirable to show the strong constraint which the woman's faith laid upon Him. He saw that she had faith—He knew its exact measure ; and his conduct was framed to bring out its strongest manifestations. The silence of their Master, so very different from his usual pitying tenderness towards the distressed, was gratifying to the disciples, and suited the harsh temper with which, as Jews, they regarded all the heathen, calling them ' dogs ' and the like, as the Mohammedans now call Christians. Still, they require more active austerity towards this poor creature, and begged their Lord to send her away altogether. He then did speak, saying to her, ' I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' This was a further triumph to the disciples, who must have heard these words with great approbation. And the woman—what could she reply ? Nothing. Yet there was that in what she had heard of Him, and in what she saw of Him now, which told her heart that He was not so harsh as He appeared : that He could not, so far as He seemed, have shut up his sympathies within the narrow bounds of Jewish exclusiveness. She therefore only bowed herself low before Him, and in the deep anguish of her spirit groaned forth, ' Lord, help me ! ' But again He said, ' It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs.' This was exceedingly severe ; yet it struck her ears less harshly than it strikes ours. She knew that, in comparing the Jews to the children of God's family, and the heathen to the dogs without, He simply used the comparison most common among his people, as expressing the relation between them, without meaning to give personal offence ; just as at present a Moslem will call

one 'an infidel' to his face, without meaning to be personally offensive, or even uncivil.

One would suppose this answer enough to crush her hopes altogether. But it was not so. She had a faith that could not be discouraged, and would not be repulsed. Her faith was of the sort that conquers. Her reply was prompt and ready, the best absolutely that could be made. She did not dispute—she did not remonstrate—she did not even attempt to turn the edge of this thrust by renewed supplication. She accepted it with open bosom—she acquiesced in it. She and hers were, she admitted it, unworthy; but there might be some hopes and blessings still for even her. She 'claims no place within the temple; she is content to remain standing as a doorkeeper in the outer court, only claiming the grace which befits the occupant of such a station.'<sup>1</sup> 'Truth, Lord,' she cried; 'yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.' To us it requires some reflection to see the exquisite *fitness* of this rejoinder, and to understand the strength of the faith that could stand up under such reiterated discouragement. But Jesus felt its full force in one moment; and He was all the while not merely hearing her words, but looking upon her heart. His voice altered, his countenance relaxed, and she beheld the King in all the beauty of his benignity and tenderness. He said to her, 'O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt. *For this saying, go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.*'

We next find Jesus by the shore of the sea of Galilee, where one was brought to Him who 'was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech.' This shows that he had not been born deaf, or he would not have possessed even the imperfect use of speech; but had either become deaf before the organs of speech had acquired their full strength, or had been so long deaf as to have partially lost, by the disuse of talk, the full command of them. This man Jesus took aside; why, we know not, unless that, without such a precaution, the mode of operation intended by Him as a help to the man's faith might be desecratingly

<sup>1</sup> OLSHAUSEN.

imitated by others as an efficient instrument of cure. Having the man apart, Jesus put his fingers into his ears, and then touched his tongue with the moisture of his own mouth. These were without doubt symbolic actions, intended to call out, in one not accessible to sound, the strongest faith in, and expectation of, the blessings about to be imparted. Our Lord then looked up to heaven, to let the man, already accustomed to the language of action, understand that the power about to relieve him was altogether from heaven, and not in any way of earth ; and thus to prevent him from misinterpreting the preceding actions as of themselves helpful to his cure. As He looked, He sighed deeply at the thought of the infinite miseries which sin had brought upon the race of man ; and then He said to the shut ear and the bound-up tongue, ΕΡΗΦΑΘΑ, ' Be opened ;' and at that instant the man's utterance became free, and he heard once more the music of the human voice.

After this, being now in the localities familiar with his presence, fresh crowds began to gather to Him ; and on one occasion He again supplied miraculously with food an assemblage of four thousand persons, besides women and children. This miracle is, in its general character, like the former feeding of the multitude—so like, indeed, as to have suggested to some that they are merely different reports of the same event. But a close inspection discloses essential variations, which show the two transactions to have been really different. On the former occasion *five* thousand persons were present, but now *four* ; then these persons had only been with Jesus part of one day, but now they had been three days in attendance upon Him. The provision, too, was then only *five* loaves and two fishes, but it is now somewhat larger, being *seven* loaves ; and the fragments that remained filled in the former instance *twelve* baskets, but in this not more than *seven*.

A subsequent visit to Bethsaida is distinguished by the cure of a blind man. In this case also our Lord took the man aside, even out of the town, and touched his eyes, and anointed them with saliva, obviously for the same reason as that just noticed in the case of the man deaf and dumb. What chiefly

distinguishes this miracle from other cures of blind men, is the progression of the cure. After having once touched his eyes, our Lord asked him if he saw aught. He answered, that 'he saw men as trees walking.' Jesus then touched his eyes again; and when he once more looked up, he saw clearly. Or it may be, that although his sight was perfectly restored at first, he still wanted that distinctness of visual perception which usually is acquired only by some experience, but which was here imparted by the second touch. It is observable that Jesus did not in the first instance utter any words, such as 'Be opened,' which had been a summary and absolute command. He therefore doubtless meant that it should be with the man according to his faith, and that, being somewhat weak, sufficed not for his perfect cure; but his faith being strengthened by the attainment of even imperfect vision, the second application became effectual. The man's observation, that he saw men as trees walking, shows he had been born blind. As the figures moved, he concluded they were men; but as the images were indistinct and shapeless, they rather met his idea of trees, and he would have thought them trees, only that they walked,—a comparison the more proper to his condition, as he could have had little idea of trees except from their trunks, with which he had often come in contact, and among which he had often groped. He had also known by touch the height of a man, but could not thus realize the height of a tree, and was therefore not very sensible of the difference between the stature of a man and that of a tree.

When the child whose eyes were couched by Cheselden first saw, 'he knew not the shape of anything, nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude; but being told what the things were, whose form he before knew from feeling, he would carefully observe that he might know them again.'

**Thirty-seventh Week—Fifth Day.**

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MATTHEW XVI. 13—XVII. 21 ; MARK VIII. 27—IX. 29 ;

LUKE IX. 18—43.

CESAREA-PHILIPPI, or Philip's Cesarea, was so called to distinguish it from another and a more important city of the same name upon the coast, and derived its distinctive designation from the tetrarch Herod Philip (not the husband of Herodias), in whose territory it lay. It was therefore a modern town, but perhaps upon the site of the ancient Dan ; and being away near one of the springs of the river Jordan, and far beyond the limits of Herod's dominion, the district had probably been sought by our Saviour as a place of temporary retirement and retreat.

It was in this neighbourhood that our Lord questioned the disciples as to the opinions entertained of Him. The answer has been already stated by anticipation. But now, when Jesus further asked, ' But whom say ye that I am ? ' Peter answered for the rest : ' Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Peter had made virtually the same declaration not long before ; and Jesus had simply remarked, that notwithstanding this declaration made on behalf of all, there was *one* among the chosen twelve who would prove a traitor to the conviction thus expressed. He was then apparently not willing to enter into the Messianic question, on which He knew that their views were still erroneous, because the time was not come to explain all things distinctly even to them. Therefore, although, as it seems to us, they had got so far in advance of the mass of their countrymen as to believe that the kingdom He came to establish was not one of vulgar conflict, conquest, and glory, they did believe that it was to be a visible earthly kingdom of truth, righteousness, justice, and blessing. But now, Jesus, being ready to enlighten them further, received the declaration of



Peter with marked emphasis of approbation. The apostles were highly elated by this supposed confirmation of their views, and doubtless expected that He was now at last about to declare himself openly; and they felt that when He thought fit to do this, among a people already willing to receive Him *as the Messiah*, his miraculous powers would suffice to silence all opposition, and to seat Him on the throne of David.

These hopes were somewhat damped, when, the instant after He had received and plainly responded to their recognition, He strictly enjoined them to let no man know that He was the Christ.

Still more were they disheartened, when from that time forward, though their hopes had been raised so high, He began to talk to them plainly—to them, not to the people at large—of things that had only been at times obscurely hinted at before: ‘that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.’ This degrading contrast to the visions of glory which had but just now dazzled their aching sight, was too painful, too incomprehensible, to be borne without remonstrance by such men as the disciples. Peter again took upon him to express the general feeling—besides that his love for his Master revolted from the images of dishonour which were thus presented. He began to rebuke Him. Peter began to *rebuke* Jesus! He said, ‘Be it far from Thee, Lord: *this shall not* be unto Thee!’ Little did he know then—but he knew well afterwards—that the destinies of the world hung upon that being done which he said *should not* be done; and that his puny ‘shall not’ was a denial of the ‘SHALL’ which had been uttered in the eternal counsels of God. Jesus, who in this beheld with pain the instinctive abhorrence of the natural mind to the doctrines of the Cross, replied by a rebuke, the severity of which comes out strongly in contrast with the commendation the same apostle had lately received. Here was another of the ‘falls’ to which the over-confidence of Peter continually subjected him.

In the close of the discourse which our Lord then addressed

to the disciples, He clearly pointed out that the glory which they had expected to attend the present coming of the Messiah was reserved for a future time. And He now purposed to encourage them, to strengthen their faith, and to advance their views of his character and office, by affording them a glimpse of that glory which essentially belonged to Him.

Six days after He had opened their eyes, but not yet their understandings, with regard to the humiliations awaiting Him, and while they still pondered with depressed spirits a matter which they regarded with dismay and aversion, and which they found it so difficult to reconcile with his previous distinct admission that He was the Christ of God, they arrived towards evening at a mountain, the name and situation of which are unknown, but which is generally conceived to be Mount Tabor. This supposes they had meanwhile come into Galilee, which is indeed on other grounds sufficiently likely. Into this mountain our Lord withdrew for quiet prayer, leaving the body of his disciples below, and taking with Him only the three always favoured apostles—Peter, James, and John. Here He seems to have retired a little apart from them, though still within sight and hearing; and as He continued long in prayer, they, under the pressure of fatigue and unrest, fell asleep. They were awakened suddenly by a glare of light; and then, to their deep amazement, they saw that a great change had passed over their Master. ‘His face did shine as the sun; and his raiment was white as the light.’ And He was not alone: for two glorified beings appeared beside Him, conversing with Him; and the bewildered apostles knew that they were Moses and Elias, the chiefs of the Law and the Prophets, who came, as it were, to give testimony and homage to the Consummator, who had in these latter days appeared to finish the work which they had in their day been employed to prepare and advance. And what was the subject of their conversation? ‘They spake of his decease,<sup>1</sup> which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.’ This must have greatly surprised the apostles, and no less have

<sup>1</sup> Literally *exodus*, a departure—that is, departure from this life, and therefore properly death.

edified them. They saw that the matter, from the very idea of which their souls shrank, was familiar to Moses and to Elias, and therefore, as they would infer, one of deep and solemn interest in the courts of heaven. This impression was made, and bore good fruit thereafter; but at the moment, Peter, having the two ideas of his Lord's glory and of his humiliation presented to his mind, thrust the latter aside, and rested wholly upon the former. He fancied that now at last his Master had assumed his visible Messianic glory; and that thus introduced and inaugurated by Moses and Elias, his reign would commence from that hour, and that perhaps this very mountain was to become the seat of his authority. He cried out, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here!' That was indeed most true; and he felt what he said. But he added: 'If Thou wilt, let us build three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' Luke says, that in uttering these words Peter did not know what he said; which seems to imply that he expressed merely a vague impression, without grasping the full purport and effect of his own words. The idea in his mind seems to have been founded on a fear that Moses and Elias should disappear, before the effect which he supposed might be produced by their presence could be realized; and therefore he would detain them with Jesus, and provide them with booths for their seclusion and shelter, while he and the others went about to proclaim this manifestation, and direct the multitude to repair to the mountain to render homage to their law-giver, their prophet, and their Messiah. There was an offensive equalization of the three in this mode of expression; and while he yet spake, they were enclosed in a far different tabernacle—a tabernacle of bright cloud, which gathered around them upon that mountain top, and hid them from view. Then a voice was heard saying, 'THIS is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him.' As the beloved Son, He was far greater than Moses and Elias, who were but servants; and they were henceforth to hear HIM—Him only. When the cloud of light melted into thin air, Jesus remained alone, and had resumed his ordinary appearance, except that perhaps a divine

effulgence lingered on his face, as on that of Moses when he descended from the Mount.

One of the evangelists records a short but important conversation which took place between Jesus and his three disciples on the subject of this manifestation. Fully acknowledging, on the evidence before them, the absolute certainty that their Master was the Messiah, on which their convictions had at times wavered, they now ask, 'Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?' that is, Since *Thou* art come as the Messiah, how is it that Elias, as we have now seen him, did not precede Thee? He replied that Elias *had preceded* Him; and went on to speak so as to show them that He referred to John the Baptist.

The disciples below had meanwhile been applied to by a distressed father to heal his son, possessed by a devil, who seems to have kept him in the condition of a deaf and dumb lunatic, subject to strong paroxysms of violence and pain. The disciples were unable to effect his cure; and some scribes, who had by this time gathered around, were questioning them and taunting them upon their failure, when Jesus appeared. The disciples were glad to shelter themselves under the broad shield of their Master's protection, who sternly called the attention of the scribes to himself as One ready to answer all they could allege, and to do every work of God. They held back, however, and the father of the lad came forward, and respectfully explained the case. Jesus directed the lad to be brought to Him; and no sooner had he come near, than he fell to the ground, wallowing and foaming there. Jesus asked how long it had been thus with him, and was told 'from infancy;' the father adding: 'But if Thou canst do anything, have compassion upon us, and help us.' It is clear that the scribes had succeeded in raising a doubt as to the power of the Master to accomplish that in which the disciples had failed. But Jesus said, 'If thou canst believe, *all things are possible to him that believeth.*' The poor man, greatly agitated, even to tears, made the memorable answer, which remains as a precious gift to the church in all ages: 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbe-

lief.' Nothing more was needed: Jesus made no remark. This faith was of a kind to ask the response of acts, not words. And Jesus did act signally. There was nothing intermediate, as usual in such cases; none of the customary appliances and seeming instrumentalities. He did not take the lad aside; He did not touch him; He made no applications to his ears or mouth; but covering the failure of his disciples with the glory of his own acts, He commanded the unclean spirit to quit the youth, and enter into him no more. The parting throe was indeed terrible, and the sufferer lay as dead upon the ground. But Jesus raised him by the hand, and delivered him, perfectly restored, to his father.

The sensation produced by this miracle was very great. It was attested by the crowds which Jesus had seen running from all quarters, and which had perhaps made Him hasten his proceedings. 'They were all amazed at the mighty power of God.'

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Dr. Kitto's notes require some corrections here on points of geography. The course of the gospel narrative shows that the events narrated by Matthew and Mark (Matt. xvi. 13-xvii. 21; Mark viii. 27-ix. 32) took place in the region of Cæsarea-Philippi. After healing the blind man at Bethsaida, on the north-east shore of the sea of Galilee, Jesus went with his disciples into the coasts of Cæsarea. The route He followed was probably up the east bank of the Jordan. The site of the town is well known, and its ruins are among the finest in Palestine. It was not, as Dr. Kitto suggests, identical with the ancient border city of Dan. Dan stood in the centre of a plain, beside the great fountain of the Jordan, and is now called Tell el-Kady. Cæsarea was built on a broad terrace on the mountain side, four miles farther east, beside another fountain of the Jordan. Its ancient name was Paneas, and it is now called Baneas. The scenery around Cæsarea is very beautiful. Our Lord spent some time here. It was probably beside the fountain Peter confessed his belief in his divinity; and the form of Christ's reply to him may perhaps have been suggested by the lofty cliff which rises over the fountain, and on which a heathen temple then stood. A few days later the Transfiguration took place. There cannot be a doubt that 'the high mountain apart' was one

of the peaks of Hermon, which towers over Cæsarea. On coming down again from the mountain the lunatic boy was healed; and in such a position the force of Christ's rebuke to his disciples could be fully comprehended: 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto *this mountain* (Hermon), Remove hence to yonder place (pointing down, perhaps, into the deep valley of the Jordan which lay below), and it shall remove.'

We read further, that after the miraculous cure of the lunatic 'they departed thence,' that is, from Cæsarea, 'and passed through Galilee,' which lay immediately south of it, and came to Capernaum.

Until recently, it was generally supposed that Tabor was the scene of the Transfiguration; but the position of that hill does not suit the gospel narrative. The present writer became convinced that Hermon was the real scene on his first visit to that mountain in the year 1850. Since that time, this opinion has been acquiesced in by most Biblical geographers.

### *Thirty-seventh Week—Sixth Day.*

#### THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

MATTHEW XVII. 22—XVIII. ; MARK IX. 30—50 ;

LUKE IX. 43—X. 16.

JESUS had, at the foot of the Mount, joined the general body of his disciples, and, after the cure of the demoniac, proceeded on his way. Aware that this remarkable miracle, and the manner in which his mere presence had silenced the scribes, were likely to exalt the ordinary expectations of his disciples; and observing that the three favoured apostles had gathered nourishment to the like expectations from what they had witnessed on the Mount, our Lord again spoke very plainly of his betrayal, his death, and his resurrection. Nothing could be plainer than his words, to which He bespoke their earnest attention: 'Let these sayings sink deep into your ears.' But it is said that 'they did not understand'—mainly, no doubt, because they were not willing to understand—how it was possible that such humiliation, which would seem to frustrate all

their hopes and expectations, could consist with the earthly greatness of the Messiah, in which they expected to share. This idea they could not dismiss, and they could not make it compatible with the other, which was not so strenuously enforced upon them. Their Master could have explained; but 'they were afraid to ask Him,' having in remembrance the sharp rebuke which Peter had received; and Peter himself, usually so forward, being further restrained by the fresh impression of what he had witnessed on the Mount. It is also to be recollected, that in these distressing intimations their future benefit, still more than their present enlightenment, was what Jesus had in view. When the events should occur, it ought to prevent them from concluding that all was lost—that the object of his coming had been frustrated—or that unfounded pretensions had been advanced by himself; for they would perceive that nothing had happened which He had not foreseen, and expected, and declared to be inevitable and necessary. And after all had passed, their faith would be strengthened by remembering his declarations, that this humiliation was not only consistent with the purpose for which He came into the world, but was the very purpose itself. Conceive how it would have been with them, if what afterwards took place—the betrayal, the agony, the torture, the death—had seemed to them to have taken Him by surprise—had manifestly been contrary to his expectations, and against his will. Could they, then, have reached any other conclusion than that He had either imposed upon them or deceived himself? All this was prevented by his previous declarations to the disciples, and, although more covertly, to the multitude; by which He shut out for ever those doubts and cavils which would have filled the mouths of his enemies, had not such precautions been taken.

The disciples understood enough, however, at this time, to be 'very sorry.' They loved not less than they revered their Lord; and the bare idea that He might possibly be exposed to ignominy, maltreatment, and suffering, filled their hearts with grief. This was natural. They had not been worthy to walk with Him had they felt otherwise.

But nothing our Lord could say, however plain, made any permanent impression during his lifetime. As the stomach assimilates that which is congenial to it, and rejects that which is not, so they were always ready in forgetting these intimations of his humiliation; while they zealously seized on, and treasured up, all the ideas of Messianic glory which circumstances afforded, or which any of his acts and sayings appeared to present.

This must be heedfully remembered by those who would rightly understand the remainder of our Lord's career in relation to his disciples.

The next incident in that career requires to be introduced by the statement, that there was payable from every adult male among the Jews the sum of half a shekel yearly for the treasury of the temple. There is a regulation to this effect in Exod. xxx. 11-16, but it is far from certain that the payment was intended to be yearly. It came, however, to be so understood, and was in general paid very willingly to the appointed collectors by all Jews, even by those who dwelt in foreign parts. The sum may be taken as equal to fifteen pence. It was at



first, like all other payments, made in weighed silver. But the Maccabees having coined money into shekels and half shekels, the temple dues were paid in such coinage. In our Lord's time, however, these coins had become scarce, and for the purposes of this payment the Græco-Roman *didrachmon* (double *drachma*) was taken to represent the half shekel, and was so generally used that the tax itself came to be called the Didrachmon. It



should be observed, however, that although the people usually paid the collectors in this coin, the coin itself could not be paid into the temple on account of the symbols and effigies, deemed idolatrous, which it bore, and had to be changed for Jewish money at Jerusalem. Hence the vocation of the 'money-changers' whom our Lord expelled from the temple. It should be added, that it was in a great measure a voluntary impost—that is, no one was forced to pay it, or punishable for not paying it; but he who neglected it would be considered a bad Jew, and an irreligious person.

Now, the payment of this temple tribute became due by the time our Lord returned to Capernaum. As they passed through the street, the collectors—who were respected men, and not contemned, like the publicans who levied the Roman taxes—accosted Peter, who was some way behind, and asked him if his Master paid the *didrachmon*. With characteristic haste he answered in the affirmative, thus virtually pledging Jesus to pay a tax to which, on his part, some serious objections might reasonably be entertained. It was important that this matter should be put on a right footing before the minds of the disciples. When, therefore, they had entered the house, and Peter was about to mention the circumstance, Jesus anticipated him, and showed that He already knew all that had passed, by asking the question, 'Of whom do the kings of *the earth* take custom or tribute: of their own children [sons] or of strangers?' Peter said, 'Of strangers;' to which Jesus rejoined, 'Then are the children free.' Here the argument is very clear: kings do not take tribute of their sons; but the temple was his Father's house, and therefore no claim could be rightly made upon Him for this payment. Still it was his purpose to pay it, to avoid giving needless offence, and lest it should be imputed to Him that He was an enemy of the temple, and sought its ruin by setting the example of withholding the tax on which its maintenance chiefly depended. But He had not the money—not fifteen pence! Yet there is no question that this small sum might have been procured in some way without much difficulty, and there was no positive need of

a miracle to supply the want. But our Lord saw fit to connect, in the minds of his disciples, this voluntary humiliation on his part, with an act re-asserting the dignity which might, by this concession, seem to have been somewhat compromised. He desired Peter to go down to the lake and cast in a hook, and in the first fish that came up to it he would find a *stater*—a coin equal to *four* drachmæ, and therefore to double the amount required for a single person. ‘That take, and give unto them for me and thee.’ In this single instance we are not informed of the result of the procedure; but we cannot doubt that it is sufficiently indicated in the directions thus given. Fish are easily caught in this mode in the same lake at this day; and it is not unusual at Tiberias for travellers to order a dinner of fish, and presently to see a man returning from the lake with an ample supply, which he has taken by hook and line from the shore. It is also the nature of most fish to catch at any thing bright; and hence there are numerous anecdotes of articles in precious metal being found in fishes. The wonder here is in the fact that, as foretold by his Lord, the first fish which came to Peter’s hook contained the precise sum that had been indicated. It was also not merely our Lord’s foreknowledge of the fact—though He did foreknow it—but it was the purpose of his will—of that will to which all creation is obedient, that impelled the fish containing this coin, and that one fish only out of the myriads in the lake, to the hook of Peter.

When this matter of the tribute money had been disposed of, our Lord inquired of the apostles what it was that they had been so earnestly discussing upon the road. He needed not this information, but wished to appeal to their own consciousness, which was so effectually awakened by the question, that they held down their heads and returned no answer. They had, in fact, been contending which of them was the greatest in services and claims, and might therefore expect the highest place in the splendid kingdom they still persisted in supposing their Master was about to establish. Perceiving by their silence that the object of his question had been answered, our Lord did not directly reprove them further; but in a few words,

rendered doubly impressive by a vivid illustration, He set before them the worthlessness of their contention, and its utter antagonism to that spirit which must rule in the kingdom of God. Taking a little child, He placed him in the midst, and told them to make this child, in its unassuming ingenuousness, their model: he among them who was most childlike and unassuming, who thought least of himself and his worth—he would be of most importance in the kingdom of God. He then tenderly embraced the child, and said, 'Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth Him that sent me.' By this He struck at the root of the contention among the disciples, teaching them that it is not merely what a man does that constitutes the worthiness of his deeds, but the spirit in which he does them. The act may be great or small; its worth depends upon its being done in the name of Christ, and for his sake.

The apostles do not seem to have entered into the depth of our Lord's meaning; for John proceeded to mention an instance that seemed to him inconsistent with the rule thus laid down. It appears that the miracles of Christ, and those which the apostles during their recent tour had wrought by calling upon his name, had induced others who were not within the immediate circle of the disciples, to call upon the name of Jesus for the healing of demoniacs. This came under the notice of the apostles in at least one instance; and, displeased that any one out of their circle, and without authority from their Lord, should try in such a way to make himself equal with them, they forbade the act. Although some taint of selfish motives may have intruded, the apostles felt so sure of having done right, that they distrusted a rule which would seem to make it wrong. For if the smallest action done in the name of Christ were so valuable, they must have erred in forbidding this. Jesus accepted this conclusion, and told them they had indeed erred in interdicting the miracles they had referred to. If a man in sincerity believed that, by thus using the name of Christ, works so great could be accomplished, this would show that he had good thoughts of Christ, and had at least those

beginnings of faith which might lead to better things. And if he had actually wrought a miracle by this means, that was in itself a sign that he had spoken in faith, and that God had accepted and responded to his faith; and therefore he ought not to be forbidden to act, although he was not within the inner circle of Christ's disciples.

Soon after this, a question of Peter afforded our Lord an opportunity of laying down the law of Christian forgiveness, in the beautiful parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

About the same time our Lord chose out from the larger body of his disciples the number of seventy, that they might go on a missionary tour, in pairs, to the towns and villages He himself intended afterwards to visit. Why He chose this precise number is not known. Perhaps there was no special reason; but some have thought that there may have been a general reference to the seventy elders, or members of the Sanhedrim; or to the notion common among the Jews, that there were seventy languages and nations upon the earth. The instructions given to them were very similar to those formerly impressed upon the twelve; but since the opposition of the Pharisees had greatly increased in violence, the conduct they were to observe under persecution was carefully pointed out, and the sustainments they were entitled to expect were fully declared, while strong denunciations were uttered against those places which should refuse to receive their testimony.

### *Thirty-seventh Week—Seventh Day.*

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.—JOHN VII. 2—VIII. 11.

AUTUMN had now arrived, and our Lord having been prevented from attending the last Passover, resolved to go to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles. At first He did not show this intention, and therefore his relatives remonstrated with Him, and urged Him to it. They told Him that his manifest evasion of publicity scarcely consisted with his object of being

publicly known ; and they reminded Him that He owed something to those who had attached themselves to Him in Judea, and who, by reason of his protracted absence in Galilee, had witnessed few if any of his mighty works. It is evident that these near relatives of our Lord, who had always his human circumstances in view, found it difficult to believe in Him with entire fixedness. The miracles they had seen Him perform inclined them to belief, but they were ever anxious to receive yet more signal proofs of his Messianic dignity. They now wished to see Him in the great theatre of the metropolis, and probably continued to expect some decisive moment, when He would reveal Himself with power as the Messiah. In reply to their representation, He gave them to understand that what He did took place according to the plan of divine wisdom, and that the period of time which that wisdom had appointed had not yet arrived. But there were no such considerations to regulate *their* movements. They could go when they liked.

It is clear that Jesus did not consider the present moment, when so many of the people were moving towards Jerusalem, the most suitable for his journey, since He desired not to attract attention without necessity, or to draw hatred upon himself. Such hatred the relatives could not incur, for their relation to the world was not like his—that of light to darkness. They therefore departed, not clearly understanding whether He meant to follow or not. There is every probability that if our Lord had gone with the advancing crowds, He would on many grounds have formed a centre of attraction to those going from Galilee, who would have attended Him to Jerusalem in immense numbers, thus giving a dangerous aspect to his approach, even if the people did not, as it was likely that they would—seeing how easily a large crowd can be led to act upon an impulse of enthusiasm—hail Him as their king and leader, and in that quality present Him before Jerusalem. This was by no means what Jesus sought ; it was indeed what He most earnestly shunned. Such a course would also have been imprudent at that time, even had his objects—to suppose

for a moment a thing so impossible—been those of personal ambition ; for the southern Jews, having seen and heard so much less of Him than those of the north, were by no means so well prepared as the latter to recognise Him as even a temporal Messiah, while all were equally indisposed to acknowledge Him in his true character. It is likely that the Jews in Judea would not have been over ready to concur in a movement originating with the pilgrims from Galilee, and the nature of which they could not understand, especially when it is considered that the Galileans were rather looked down upon by their southern brethren.

We have already intimated, however, that the attendance from Galilee was much less at this feast than at the Passover, while that of the southern Jews was very considerable. There was therefore a larger proportion of those who had not yet received the advantage of our Lord's instruction and miracles, and a smaller proportion of those whose movements were likely to compromise his real objects. These considerations may have had some influence in drawing our Saviour to Jerusalem at this festival, though He had avoided going thither seven months before at the Passover.

Meanwhile there was much conversation and debate concerning Him at Jerusalem. He was generally expected there, probably because, as He had not attended either of the previous feasts of that year, it was concluded that He would not neglect the only one that remained. Even the members of the Sanhedrim were on the watch for Him. It seems to have been they who sought Him, saying, 'Where is he?' They, perhaps from hatred, forbore to name Him, while yet their abstinence from any of those abusive epithets, in the use of which they were ready and expert, has been by some thought to indicate a softening of their anger towards Him. This is scarcely conveyed in the further fact, that 'no man spake openly of Him,' that is, committed himself to a decided opinion about Him, 'for fear of the Jews.' But among themselves the people were greatly divided. Some affirmed that He was an upright man, the honesty of whose intentions was beyond suspicion ; while

others maintained, on the contrary, that He was one who deceived the people.

At length Jesus made his appearance ; but it was not until the middle of the feast (which lasted eight days) that He went up to the temple, whether from late arrival or from desiring that the first excitement should subside. He then spoke with such boldness and force, that those of the people who were aware of the evil intentions of the rulers against Him, were astonished to find that He was left unmolested. But although the Pharisees did not wish to apprehend Him at present, they gave directions that any fit opportunity which presented itself should be taken advantage of ; and when at length they heard that many of the people were becoming seriously inclined to accept Him as the Christ, they could no longer act with prudent restraint, but sent officers to apprehend Him at once, and bring Him before them, sitting there in council to receive Him. They had to sit longer than they expected ; for the messengers, finding Jesus speaking, had waited a little to hear Him, and were then so strongly impressed by what He said, and dismayed by the aspect of the people, that they were afraid to lay hands upon Him. Returning without their prisoner, the officers excused themselves, by declaring that ‘never man spake like this man !’ This answer did not tend to allay the resentment of the rulers, which they expressed very strongly. Nicodemus, who, it will be remembered, belonged to this council, ventured to remark that the law did not authorize the condemnation of any man before his conduct had been examined, and he himself heard in his own defence. They answered with the contemptuous taunt, ‘Art thou also a Galilean? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.’ They thus endeavoured to cover with obloquy all leaning to the cause of Jesus, by taking it for granted it could not exist but among Galileans. For the rest, they were right in concluding that the Messiah was not to come (originally) from Galilee ; and they knew not, though they might have known by proper inquiry, that Jesus came from Bethlehem. They were wrong, however, in saying that no prophet could

come out of Galilee ; for Galilee had already produced several prophets—Jonah, Elijah, and perhaps Nahum ; but a blind fury against Jesus closed their eyes for the moment to these examples.

By the next day, when Jesus again appeared in the temple, a trap had been laid for Him. A woman, taken in adultery, had been found, and they brought her to Him for judgment, saying, 'Master, Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned ; *but what sayest Thou ?*' Some of them had possibly heard, and others had probably heard of, the Sermon on the Mount, in which He had seemed to place his own authority above that of Moses ; and the dilemma in which they strove to place Him was this : the law certainly denounced death against a convicted adulteress, but this law had fallen into disuse ; and owing to the corrupt morals of the age, the crime seldom incurred any other penalty than divorce. If, therefore, Jesus declared *for* the punishment of death, He would lose ground in public opinion, by insisting, contrary to the customs of the time, and to his own previous declarations, upon a rigid adherence to the letter of the law ; but if He declared on the other side, they could denounce Him as one who despised the law of Moses, and sought to overturn it.

While they made their accusation, and claimed his decision, Jesus being seated on the ground, seemed to be musingly and inattentively engaged in tracing characters in the dust, as one is apt to do in a careless or absent mood. He gave no sign of attention ; but when they had done, He looked up, and said quietly, 'He that is without sin among you, let HIM first cast a stone at her.' This alludes to the custom of the witnesses, on whose evidence a criminal has been convicted, casting the first stone in punishment. He then again bent his attention downward, and resumed his musing occupation. Meanwhile all those who were present to confound Him stole silently away, 'being convicted by their own conscience' of sin : not perhaps all of the particular sin, although *that* was frightfully common in this age, and many of the most exalted persons and most eminent teachers were guilty of it. But they were



convicted of sin generally. Every one felt that Jesus knew of him that he had sinned, so that he could not dare to lift up his head, if any one demanded the same severity of judgment against him that he asked against this guilty woman. Thus it happened that, when our Lord looked up again, the woman stood alone before Him, veiled in tears of shame and grief. He asked her what had become of her accusers, and if she had already been condemned; and hearing that she had not, He said, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' declining to assume the functions of a judicial officer, which did not belong to Him. He then dismissed her, without pronouncing judgment upon her past sins. He did not wish to say directly that she was pardoned. But the whole conduct of Jesus, so earnest and solemn, and yet so mild, could not fail in the meantime to make a deep impression upon one who, during the whole of the preceding scene, must have stood in the presence of death. This impression would be still further deepened by the serious admonition which He gave her: 'Go, and sin no more!'



## Thirty-eighth Week—First Day.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.—JOHN VIII. 12—IX.

AFTER the signal discomfiture of his enemies in the case of the woman taken in adultery, our Lord appears to have been allowed to pursue his course undisturbed for a time, until one memorable occasion, when a direct attempt was made upon his life.

There was a place in the temple corridors called 'the treasury,' because a large chest with a hole in the lid was deposited there to receive the voluntary offerings of the people. This seems to have been a favourite place with Jesus, as we more than once read of his teaching there. He was here on the occasion to which we refer. His language in speaking became more bold and authoritative than ever, while it also appeared mysterious to those whose eyes were blinded by so many preconceived notions of self-aggrandizement. He distinctly declared himself the Messiah, and said that his claim had been already well authenticated; and He told them that all who believed not in Him, and refused Him as their Redeemer, must die in their sins. The first part of his address was, with some carping interruptions from the Pharisees, well received by the auditors, many of whom believed in Him. But proceeding, He began to say that the truth would make them free; and they took up these words warmly, declaring that they were Abraham's seed, and never yet in bondage to any,—a monstrous fiction, dear to the national vanity, but which might have been sufficiently disproved by pointing to the helmets of the Roman soldiers in the adjoining tower of Antonia. He then showed how little their conduct substantiated their claim to be regarded as the true children of Abraham. They showed themselves rather the children of the

father of lies than of the father of the faithful, since they sought the life of One who offered them the truth; and their state of mind and heart was the reverse of Abraham's, seeing they wished to destroy Him in whom Abraham had rejoiced. He meant, as formerly explained,<sup>1</sup> that Abraham had been permitted to realize a distinct conception of the Saviour and his work, and had rejoiced in the prospects which it opened; in short, that Abraham was one of those who in old times 'died in faith, not having received [the fulfilment of] the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them.'

If they had seen fit to listen with attention, and to bestow some thought on what they heard, the Jews must have perceived that He spoke of deep matters; but they, in their careless ignorance or sinful perversity, chose to understand Him as speaking of some earthly intercourse with Abraham, and they cried out with affected astonishment, 'Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?' Jesus did not think it needful to correct their misconception, but, accepting their question as it stood, answered it in the grand words: 'BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.' The present tense is used, though the past is meant. This is proper only to God, with whom, as with Christ himself, there is no past nor future, and to whom all time is NOW. Hence, in the Old Testament, He takes the names of I AM, and I AM THAT I AM; and the term used by our Lord, coupled with the implied assertion that He had lived before Abraham, could not but suggest that He claimed to be God—the Son of God, in a higher sense than those whose minds were filled with carnal notions of the Messiah were prepared to allow. That they so understood the claim, is clear from their treatment of it. They treated it as blasphemy, and snatching up the stones that lay about from the repairs of the temple, which were still in progress, they were about to hurl them at Him. But He disappeared from among them; whether by mingling with the crowd, or by rendering himself miraculously invisible for the moment, is open to question.

<sup>1</sup> Morning Series : Ninth Week—Third Day.

We have heard nothing as yet of the Sabbath question, which made so great a stir at our Lord's previous visit to Jerusalem, unless from an allusion to it in one of his discourses, as furnishing ground for the persecution to which He was subjected. But soon this question was to be revived with renewed intensity of bitterness.

As Jesus was passing along with his disciples, his attention was called to a man sitting as a beggar by the wayside, who was well known to have been blind from his birth. Respecting him, the disciples asked their Lord the curious question, for whose sins the man was thus visited—for his own, or for those of his parents. We have explained more than once, that the Jews believed signal bodily calamities to be the punishment of individual sin. But a man *born* blind manifestly could not be under punishment for his own sins in this present life. Hence arose the question, Was he punished for the sins of his parents, or for the sins committed by himself in an anterior existence?—for it has been shown that many Jews in this age believed in the transmigration of souls, and consequently that the sins of a former life might be punished in this. Jesus, in his reply, set aside this connection between special calamities and special guilt, and declared that the reason why the man had been thus afflicted was, that his privations might subserve the higher objects of God's love to himself, and to others through him. He then anointed the man's eyes with clay, tempered with saliva, and directed him to go and wash them in the somewhat distant pool of Siloam. The purpose of this seems twofold: partly to try the man's faith, as we have formerly explained, and partly to display the miracle; for it is clear that our Lord, being now away from Galilee, was no longer desirous of keeping his mighty deeds private. This well-known man, moving along with his clay-daubed eyes, could not fail to attract attention, and by the time he reached the pool a crowd probably surrounded him. He washed his eyes, and it seemed as if his blindness fell off with the clay—the sight came to his eyes; and he returned into the city with his vision perfectly restored.

This happened on the Sabbath-day; and the man was

questioned by the neighbours, who had so often seen him as a blind beggar, that they almost doubted his identity with the person they now saw. But he affirmed it; and at their request, told them how he had been cured by 'a man called Jesus.' Some of the spies, whom the Sanhedrim had set to watch the proceedings of Jesus, seem to have heard this explanation, and thinking it might avail their employers, took the man to them. He was closely pressed with questions, from which it may be seen that the Pharisees regarded the making of the clay on the Sabbath as worthy of notice, in addition to the healing; in fact, they regarded such things as a species of work, equivalent to mixing mortar, or moulding clay for bricks, and therefore in itself an infraction of the Sabbath. The Sanhedrim strove to make the man denounce and disown his healer; but they found he was of a resolutely honest temper, and that he stood up valiantly for the person who had wrought so great a benefit for him, and could not be brought to see that He had committed a great sin, and must needs be a scandalous sinner. Finding him so intractable, they affected to disbelieve that he had been cured, or that he had been born blind, and sent for his parents to question them. They were timid old people; and having heard that the Sanhedrim had already decreed that any who acknowledged Jesus should be excommunicated, they evaded the responsibility. The man was, they said, their son, and certainly he was born blind; but as for the cure, they knew nothing of it—their son was old enough to furnish all requisite information himself. So the questioners tried the man again, but found his reasoning so cogent, and his resolution so firm, that they became violent and abusive; and when he said boldly, 'If this man were not of God, He could do nothing,' they answered, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?' What a world of emphatically pharisaic arrogance there is in this—*thou* and *us*! The end was that they 'cast him out'—that is, excommunicated him—a most serious penalty among the Jews. So Jesus found one more who was worthy to suffer shame for his name.

The proceedings of the council came to the ears of Jesus, who after that looked for the man, to comfort and re-assure him. When He had found him, He said, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' The man asked who it was that claimed this high title; and when Jesus replied, 'Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He who talketh with thee,' he, recognising his Benefactor, for whom he had already witnessed a good confession, hesitated not a moment, but said, 'Lord, I believe.' Now then he is healed indeed—body and soul both are healed.

This man, in the course of his argument, had urged, that 'since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.' No instance of this is recorded in the Old Testament, whether by miracle or by natural means; nor does any example of the cure of congenital blindness by natural means occur in the Greek and Roman writers, who indeed, as well as those of more modern date, pronounce *such* blindness incurable. Since the beginning of the last century, a common form of blindness has been rendered curable by a surgical operation called couching, first performed in England by Mr. Cheselden in 1728; and in this way, persons who became blind too early in life to remember the use and objects of sight, have been healed; but there is still no instance on record of a person absolutely *born blind* obtaining the use of sight.

### Thirty-eighth Week—Second Day.

SOJOURN IN JUDEA.—LUKE X. 25—XI. 13; JOHN X.

JESUS still remained in Judea, having probably appointed the seventy to join Him there before his return to Galilee, and intending to be present at the Feast of the Dedication in December, which was now too near to make it worth while to return to Galilee in the meantime. To this interval belong some very important discourses and impressive parables, such as that of the Good Shepherd, in which He gave another

plain intimation that He was about to lay down his life for the sheep—and that not by any constraint, but of his own free will; and the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which He taught ‘a certain lawyer,’ who ‘stood up and tempted Him,’ that the command to love our neighbour as ourself is restricted to no narrow bounds of sect or condition, but applies to every one who stands within the reach of our knowledge and assistance. On another occasion, his disciples requested Him ‘to teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ How John taught his disciples, we know not; but we happily know how the disciples of Jesus were taught by Him. In what is called the Lord’s Prayer, He gave them a model of prayer—short, yet comprehensive—simple, yet cogent; and He followed it by an impressive discourse and parable, in illustration of the advantages and prevailing power of earnest and perseveringly importunate prayer. This He further illustrated on another occasion by the striking parable of the Importunate Widow, which has strengthened the hearts of untold numbers, under the discouragement of seemingly unanswered prayer. The parables of the Grain of Mustard-seed and of the Leaven—both illustrative of the growth and spread of his kingdom—belong also to this interval.

The *incidents* are few—a miracle and a reproof.

The *miracle* was performed upon a poor woman, who had been a sufferer eighteen years, and was so bent together as to be unable to lift herself up. When Jesus saw her in the synagogue, and knew how long she had been in that sad plight, He instantly healed her. This was on the Sabbath-day. From the frequency with which miracles on that day are recorded, one might think that it was chosen by our Lord in preference to any other day. But we are to remember that our Lord wrought hundreds of miracles, the particulars of which are not recorded; and these are recorded on account of the discussions to which they gave rise, or of some peculiar circumstances connected with them. Miracles on the Sabbath often excited discussion, drew forth declarations from our Lord, or had influence upon events—for the sake of which the miracles are

related. It is also to be remarked, that many afflicted people were present on the Sabbath in the synagogues, who, not being street beggars, were not to be seen in public on other days, and who, if not healed there, would not be healed at all. In the present case, the ruler of the synagogue was very angry. His words were addressed to the people, however, telling them there were six days for work : ' In them, therefore, come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath-day.' In this we trace, besides the general Jewish opinion bearing on the subject, the special one, that if a disease were of long standing, or not of a nature to be seriously affected by delay, no means of cure ought to be taken or sought for on the Sabbath.

Although the observation was not directly addressed to Jesus, He answered it, and that with a warmth of indignation not usual with Him in addressing an individual. There was evidently that in the ruler's tone and manner, in speaking to the poor woman, which moved our Lord strongly. ' Thou hypocrite,' He said, ' doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?' There was no answer to this. The adversaries of Jesus were confounded, and ' the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.'

In regard to the practice to which our Lord referred, as sanctioned by their own interpretation of the law, it was held that a beast might be led forth to watering on the Sabbath-day, provided that it bore no other burden than its collar and halter. It was lawful to draw water for it, and pour it out into the trough ; but unlawful to *carry* water to the beast, which must therefore be led forth to the well, pool, or stream, and watered there.

The *reproof* was to Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus of Bethany,—a place which still subsists as a poor village of about twenty families, on the south-eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives, in a little valley, about two miles from Jeru-



saalem. It seems to have been a general custom of our Lord when at Jerusalem, to leave the city in the evening, and pass over to the Mount of Olives, where He sometimes remained till the morning. But the nights being usually cold both in spring (at the Passover) and in autumn (at the Feast of Tabernacles), He commonly went down to Bethany, spending the night in the house of his friend and disciple Lazarus, and returning to Jerusalem in the morning. This at least was his later custom. The sisters, as well as the brother, were disciples of Jesus, and all devotedly attached to Him. One day these good people gave our Lord a special entertainment, probably in view of his approaching departure, at which the hearty, bustling Martha was exceedingly busy about the preparations for dinner; thinking in her housewifely, homely way, that she could not manifest her regard for Jesus in any mode so proper as in seeing that He was nobly entertained. The more spiritual and thoughtful sister gladly left all this to her, and rejoiced to seat herself at the feet of Jesus, to gather up into her heart the precious words that fell from Him. Martha at length took notice that Mary was thus sitting idle, as it seemed to her, while she was oppressed with so many cares and duties; and she begged Jesus to tell her sister to come and help her. Mary must have been somewhat hurt at this; but she knew her sister's blunt way too well to be greatly surprised. Besides, it is much the fashion of the East to speak and act very directly, in matters that seem to us to require nice management and delicate contrivance. But Mary also knew the heart of her Master, and felt safe from his blame. His answer was kind to Mary, and not unkind to Martha. He said, 'Martha, Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things, but ONE THING is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.' Now we know that Jesus loved Martha (John xi. 5); and that He did so, shows that she was worthy of his regard. This could not have been the case, had not she, as well as Mary, chosen 'the better part.' It is therefore harsh to construe our Lord's answer to mean, that Mary had, and that *she* had not, chosen that part. It must therefore mean,

we think, that Martha was careful and troubled about many things. Among these there was only one essential—the better part, which could not be taken away. In that part Mary shared her interest ; and in her keen solicitude about it, and her eagerness for spiritual food, she might well be excused on this occasion for her neglect of the lesser matters which the anxious hospitality of Martha deemed so important. Thus tenderly and courteously does our Lord vindicate Mary, without affronting her kind and well-meaning sister.

The return of the seventy, who seem to have made the same kind of excursion through the south of the country that the apostles had made through the north, refreshed and strengthened our Lord, by the generally favourable account which they brought of their proceedings. They perhaps dwelt a little too forcibly on the fact that the devils were subject unto them through his name ; so that He gently reminds them to rejoice far more that their names were written in heaven.

The Feast of the Dedication at which Jesus was present with his disciples, was one of human institution, having been founded, not, as some might suppose, to celebrate the dedication of Solomon's temple, but to commemorate its renewed consecration after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was celebrated every year for eight days, commencing with the 25th of Chisleu, or the 15th of December. We have an account of only one discourse which Jesus delivered at this festival : it was in 'Solomon's porch.' This porch or colonnade was in the court of the Gentiles, and was supposed to be the only part of Solomon's temple that had been left standing when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians. John specifies that 'it was winter,' probably to intimate that Jesus taught in this colonnade, in order that those who heard Him might be sheltered from the inclemency of the weather. While He was walking in this porch, his enemies, hoping to gain some advantage over Him, affected a willingness to recognise his claims as the Messiah, if He would but avow them distinctly and openly. He replied that He had already declared them with sufficient plainness for any who were willing to understand. His deeds

also afforded every requisite evidence, for they were precisely such works as the prophets ascribed to the Messiah. His sheep, his own, those whom his Father had given to Him, understood these things, and believed; and the reason *they* did not believe was because they were not his sheep. They would therefore die in their sins; but to those who believed in Him, He gave eternal life. They should never perish, neither could any one pluck them out of his hand. The Father, who gave them to Him, was greater than all; and none could pluck them out of his Father's hands. He here certainly claims essential oneness with the Father. The sheep are in his possession, and yet in the Father's; no one can pluck them from his hand—nor from the Father's; and besides, it is He who gives eternal life—and who but a divine being can do that? It scarcely needed that He should add, 'I and my Father are one,' to place his meaning beyond question. That the Jews understood Him in this sense is clear, for they forthwith took up stones to inflict summary punishment upon Him as a blasphemer. Indeed, when He arrested their hands by a question, they avowed that they sought to stone Him 'for blasphemy; and,' they added, 'because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.' Our Lord did not at all disclaim this imputation, which, if He had been merely a man, merely a holy prophet, He would have been eager to do. He showed that his claiming to be the Son of God did not lay Him open to the charge of blasphemy, even were He no more than they expected their Messiah to be; but that He was more, and therefore still less open to such a charge, He again alleged to be proved by his works. 'Believe the works,' said He, 'that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.'

That the Jews did not at all regard Him as modifying his previous declaration, is plain from the result; for though they no longer persisted in illegally stoning Him without trial, they thought they had evidence from his own mouth on which to ensure his conviction before the proper tribunal. They therefore sought to apprehend Him for the purpose of bringing Him before the Sanhedrim, but were frustrated by his sudden

departure from Jerusalem, and indeed from Judea, into the region beyond the Jordan.

**Thirty-eighth Week—Third Day.**

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.—JOHN XI.

ON getting beyond the Jordan, and out of the territory of Judea, Jesus stationed himself with his disciples at 'the place where John at first baptized.' The remembrance of John, and the influence of his teaching, were still strong in that quarter; and those who repaired to Jesus, and witnessed his teaching and miracles, naturally reverted to the connection with, and the difference between, Him and his harbinger. They said, 'John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true.' The result was, that 'many believed on Him there.'

He seems not to have been here long, but how long we know not precisely, when a man arrived in great haste with a message from the sisters at Bethany: 'Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.' This was Lazarus their brother, but they knew that He would need no other than this touching designation of him. Knowing what miracles of healing Jesus had wrought, their expectation doubtless was that He would hasten back to restore his friend; but He only said, 'This sickness is not unto death,' and the messenger probably returned with that intimation. If so, he found Lazarus dead; and, by counting the days, we shall see that he must have been already dead when Jesus made that declaration.

Our Lord did not at all hasten to depart, but remained where He was two days, before He gave any intimation that He meant to go to Bethany. Various conjectural explanations of this delay have been offered. We need not state them here; but we apprehend the case to have been this, that Jesus knew Lazarus was dead when the messenger came to tell Him that he was sick. If he had been alive, He could have healed him by a word, without going to Bethany for the purpose. As, therefore, He could not *then* prevent his dying, He saw reasons

for suffering him to remain so long dead 'for the glory of God,' that the Son of God might be the more abundantly glorified by his final restoration to life. For, in the ordinary course of nature, it should seem less difficult to restore to life the recently dead, than those in whom the process of corruption has commenced. It may also have been part of his design to allow the grief of the sisters for the loss of their brother to reach its height, so that the relief He meant to bring might make the more abiding, and therefore more salutary, impression upon them; acting thus after the manner of his heavenly Father, who often affords the first relief in the moment of greatest extremity and sorrow. After two days, during which the disciples had probably rested under the impression that Lazarus was better, they were startled by their Master declaring his intention of returning to Judea. They ventured to remonstrate, that by so doing He threw himself into the very jaws of danger, seeing with what blind fury the Jews had lately sought his life. He then informed them of the reason for his going—that Lazarus was dead—adding, 'I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.' He had been there not long before, and He was glad that the sickness of Lazarus had not then occurred; for He could not in that case have declined the solicitations of the sisters to rescue the sufferer from approaching death. If, being there, or being at hand so as He might have prevented it, He had suffered him to die, and then raised him, the miracle would have borne that aspect of vulgar ostentation, no trace of which has been found in the acts of Jesus, even by the greatest enemies of his name. In fact, it would have amounted to this, that He wilfully let Lazarus die, *for the express purpose* of raising him afterwards! Not very different from this in fact, though different in spirit, is the explanation, which supposes that Jesus tarried beyond the Jordan, in order that He might not arrive in time to save his friend from the grave.

As to the gladness of Jesus for *their* sakes, in addition to the motives already stated, there is another of great weight. Jesus knew very well that 'his hour' was close at hand; and as the

decisive moment drew on, it became very important that He should perform some miraculous act, which should afford still more unequivocal marks than his earlier ones of his divine sovereignty and omnipotence, and thus leave behind Him a deep impression, to strengthen his friends, and either to convince or confound his enemies. So important is the event in this point of view, that sceptics have been constrained to acknowledge that a circumstance so remarkable and peculiar, if irrefragably established to their satisfaction (as it ought to be, and would be, if their eyes were not blinded), would necessitate a belief in the entire evangelical record. Thus Spinoza is reported to have said to his friends, 'that if it were possible for him to persuade himself of the resurrection of Lazarus, he would dash his whole system to pieces, and embrace the faith of ordinary Christians without reluctance.'<sup>1</sup> Oh the pity, then, that he could not understand, or that, understanding, he could not yet believe it! Great had been his gain.

It was with real concern that the disciples perceived their Lord to be firmly bent on proceeding to Bethany, near as that place was to Jerusalem. Thomas, in particular, regarded the journey as so perilous, that although his attachment would not suffer him to separate himself from his Lord, yet he could not accompany Him with a joyful confidence in God. In the keen apprehension of the danger that awaited the Master and his disciples, he cried out, in a kind of despair, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him!' It is well to note the agreement of this with the subsequent indication of character which Thomas affords.

On his arrival near Bethany, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been four days in the grave. As the Jews of that age buried their dead almost immediately after decease (see Acts v. 6-10), and, unless under very peculiar circumstances, would not keep a corpse in the house overnight, this shows that, as we have said, Lazarus died the same day on which the messenger had been sent to Jesus, for the man must have taken

<sup>1</sup> BAYLE, as cited by Tholuck, whose commentary on this chapter is very valuable.

that day for his journey to the inner bank of the Jordan ; Jesus remained two days after he received the intelligence ; and the journey to Bethany required the fourth day—that is, so much of it as had expired when He reached Bethany, which was probably towards evening.

It was a custom among the Jews in cases of death, for all acquaintances to visit the bereaved persons, and console them for seven days continuously ; and as Lazarus had been well known, and seems to have been a person in what is called good circumstances, many friends had come over from Jerusalem to condole with Martha and Mary. The sisters were sitting in the house in their sorrow, surrounded by such comforters, when the rumour came that Jesus had arrived. This was either whispered apart to Martha, to whom, as the elder, any message would naturally be given ; or Mary, in her more absorbed and meditative grief, had not heard the intimation. Martha rose immediately and hastened to meet Jesus ; and when she beheld Him she cried, ‘Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died ;’ and her faith being awakened into lively action, when she saw Him actually appear whose presence had been so ardently desired, she added : ‘I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.’ It may also appear from this, that the sisters had not misunderstood the intimation which the messenger brought back : they knew that Jesus could not be under a mistake ; and as their brother was already dead, what other meaning could it bear, than that Lazarus was not to be finally given over to the power of death ? It was well known that Jesus had already raised the dead more than once ; and this could not have escaped the recollection of those who had so thoroughly explored every ground of hope.

Jesus answered her, as was at times his wont, somewhat vaguely, in order to lay open the state of her heart. He told her that her brother should rise again. This answer meeting her hopes less definitely than she expected, she replied dejectedly, that she knew well he would at one time rise from the dead. Our gracious Lord sympathized in her grief. He knew

her sorrow, and counted all her tears ; but He was not willing that even such grief should exercise undue dominion over her, and make her forgetful of that inward, eternal, and divine life, which was safe from destruction or decay. He reminded her that this life was in Him, and was imparted to the faithful by union with Him. They whose eyes and whose hopes have that direction, cannot be unduly troubled at the loss of perishable possessions—not even of that which is perishable in the friends and brothers of their souls. Anxious to fix this impression upon her mind, Jesus asked her, ‘Believest thou this?’ In her heart the feeling of unconditional surrender was now re-awakened, and shame at her momentary misgiving drew from her a full acknowledgment of Him as the Messiah. Elevated by the sacred feelings thus pressed into her heart, Martha at once hastened to summon her sister, to whom she whispered that the Master was come, and desired her presence. The communication was made privately, doubtless in order to avoid creating any movement among the Jews present, and to prevent any hostile designs. Indeed, to avoid exciting attention, Jesus had not yet entered the village ; and He probably wished to remain near the place where the grave was : for in the East sepulchres were formerly, as now, always outside of towns.

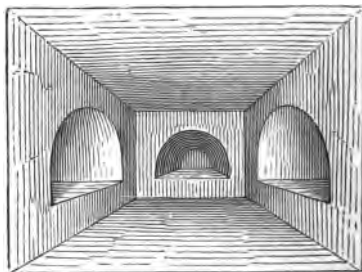
It being then the custom, as it still is, after the death of a relative or beloved friend, to visit the grave daily for a certain time, and there to give way to boundless grief ; the Jews, seeing Mary go out in an agitated manner, concluded she had gone to weep at her brother's grave. But it was to Jesus she went ; and when she reached Him, she fell at his feet, and cried, ‘Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.’ Tears prevented her further utterance, and she dared not, like the more sanguine Martha, add the assurance of a joyful hope. The Saviour, who was clothed with human nature and all its affections, was deeply moved at the grief He witnessed. ‘He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,’ and asked to be shown the place where one so beloved was buried. When He looked upon that place, He wept ; and the



tears He shed are very precious to us, for they assure us that He was indeed such as we are, although without sin.

Among the Jews present, some were friendly to, or not prepossessed against, Jesus ; others were hostile to Him, as appears by the fact that they hastened afterwards to report to the Sanhedrim what had been done. The former, who had seldom seen the Redeemer under circumstances to call forth the ordinary movements of human emotion, rejoiced to witness his sympathy, and said to one another, ' Behold how He loved him ! ' But the others sarcastically asked among themselves, how it happened that He who could give sight to the blind, had not saved his friend from the grave. It certainly seemed to them that He ought to have done so, and would have done so, if He had been able ; and his evasion or neglect of this duty, in so plain a case, threw discredit on his previous miracles, especially that of the man born blind—the last miracle He had wrought at Jerusalem.

Meanwhile our Lord drew nearer to the tomb. It was, as usual with the wealthier classes, an excavation in the rock, the mouth being closed with a large stone. Jesus directed the re-



moval of the stone. This was never done but on very extraordinary occasions ; never in the usual visits of friends to the sepulchre. Martha, who but now had allowed herself to cherish a vague hope, had again sunk into despondency, and saw nothing in the direction to take away the stone, but a desire on the part of Jesus to look once more upon the face of his friend.

She therefore opposed this proceeding, by the intimation that, as her brother had been dead four days, corruption must already have commenced its dishonouring work upon his frame. He who has studied the human heart, he who has studied his own heart, will not regard as strange things, those rapid changes of feeling, and quick flows and ebbs of faith, in any one, much less in one so susceptible to instant impressions as Martha. But Jesus reminded her that He had already in effect told her, that if she would believe, she should behold the glory of God. At these words, faith once more gushed up in her heart like a spring of water, and the Redeemer was no longer obstructed by her unbelief. The stone was rolled away; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus poured forth to his Father, not a prayer for power to work this great deed, but a thanksgiving for it as already accomplished. And this was, He said, not on his own account, but for the sake of those who stood by: 'That they may believe that Thou hast sent me.' He then cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' And at that word, Lazarus lived, and strove, as far as the cerements of the grave allowed, to come forth. It seems to us that his corpse had been deposited in one of the niches, made for the purpose, in the sides of the tomb, and that Lazarus, working himself out of the niche, slid down to the floor and stood upon his feet. But he could do no more, his limbs being closely bound by the swath-



ings then used in Jewish burials, and his face being bound up in a napkin. On this, Jesus told them that stood by to 'loose him and let him go;' and then he stood forth, fresh and free among them, without any taint upon him of the chill horrors of the tomb.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The painters think differently; but we believe we are right. The spectators could not view any part of his person when he *first* came out of the tomb, nor until the bandages and the face-napkin had been removed, so that

The evangelist has left a veil over the emotions of that meeting with a friend and a brother, who had been so greatly loved and deeply mourned ; and this veil we shall not attempt to raise. It is only stated, that many of the Jews who witnessed this great deed believed on Him, that is, as the Messiah ; but others hurried off to Jerusalem, and gave to the Sanhedrim a perverted account of the transaction. Great consternation was felt in that assembly. No one could now deny that Jesus had wrought many miracles ; and a fear was expressed lest this crowning act of power, wrought so near Jerusalem, and upon a person so well known as Lazarus, might excite the enthusiasm of the people in our Lord's favour, and lead to some movement which would attract the attention of the Romans, and occasion the loss of the few internal liberties which the nation had been permitted to retain. It was therefore deliberately determined, by a decided vote of the Sanhedrim, that Jesus should be put to death ; and from that day forward there were continual counsels among them, how this might be brought about. But meanwhile He, whose hour, though near, was not yet fully come, had disappeared from the neighbourhood, and their plots were deferred till the approaching Passover.

### *Thirty-eighth Week—Fourth Day.*

TOUR IN PEREA.—LUKE XIII. 22—XVIII. 30.

THE place to which our Lord retired was 'a country near to the wilderness, unto a city called Ephraim.' This place has, with probability, been identified by Dr. Robinson with the modern Taiyebah, and with the ancient Ephron or Ophrah of Benjamin.<sup>1</sup> It is on a high hill, fifteen or twenty miles north of Jerusalem, and a short distance north of the rock Rimmon,

the *moment* in which life returned was not witnessed by any, and in the interval we cannot doubt that the dark hues of the grave had passed from him.

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xviii. 23 ; 1 Sam. xiii. 17 ; 2 Chron. xiii. 19.

to which the remnant of the slaughtered Benjamites fled for defence,<sup>1</sup> and a little to the north-east of Bethel. It occupies a lofty site; and from it one overlooks the adjacent desert, the Jordan with its great valley, and the mountains of Perea beyond. At this place our Lord made some stay. There were about two months till the Passover, a considerable portion of which interval seems to have been spent here, with excursions probably to the neighbouring towns and villages. Then, when the time that remained was only sufficient for a leisurely missionary journey through Perea, He passed to the other side the Jordan, and proceeding southward, with many stoppages, recrossed the Jordan near Jericho, and proceeded by way of that city to Jerusalem. The history of this interval and journey is not given by the other evangelists, or is only slightly alluded to; but it is somewhat fully recorded by St. Luke, in the extended passage now under consideration, forming a large proportion of the matter peculiar to that evangelist. This visit to Perea was natural; for, as Jesus was already there when called away by the death of Lazarus, it was to be expected that He would return thither to complete his interrupted mission. At this day, the hardy and industrious mountaineers of the district to which He first withdrew, have much intercourse with the valley of the Jordan, and cultivate the rich fields and reap the harvests of Jericho. It was therefore quite natural and easy for our Lord from this point to cross the valley and the Jordan, and then turn his course towards Jericho and Jerusalem; while, at the same time, He exercised his ministry among the cities and villages along the valley and in the eastern region.

Our Lord was attended by large crowds in his progress through Perea; and we have now to indicate the discourses and parables by which He instructed them, the incidents of the journey, and particularly, the miracles which He wrought.

He exhorted the people to 'enter in at the strait gate,' for the time would come when it would be too late; when they might strive to enter in, and would not be able.

Herod Antipas was, as we have seen, ruler of Perea as well

<sup>1</sup> Judg. xx. 47.

as of Galilee. The proceedings of Jesus in Galilee had already attracted his attention, and he regarded with uneasiness his present movements in Perea. Yet our Lord's great popularity with the people, and the crowds by whom He was usually attended, made the king unwilling to commit any violence upon Him; and he would much rather that the responsibility of hostile proceedings against Him should devolve upon the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem. He therefore went indirectly to work in order to drive Him out of his territories. He got some of the Pharisees to go to Jesus, and with an appearance of friendly interest in his safety, apprise Him that Herod had designs upon his life, and urge Him to quit the country. The characteristic and fox-like cunning of this contrivance to frighten Him away was instantly apparent to our Saviour, who bade the messengers go and 'tell *that fox*' that He was engaged in his proper work, and must remain until it was finished; yet He should soon depart, though not for fear of Herod or his threats, but because his work there would be done, and He must proceed to Jerusalem; 'for,' said He, 'it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.' He knew the charge against Him was, and must be, blasphemy, of which crime only the great council at Jerusalem could take cognizance. It was also a fact, that the prophets who had been put to death had chiefly perished at Jerusalem. This was followed by that touching lamentation over Jerusalem, which He repeated afterwards under circumstances which made it no less emphatically applicable: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!'

One Sabbath-day our Lord, being upon a journey, accepted an invitation to dine at the place where He rested on that day. The inviter was a Pharisee; and whatever was his object, or whether he had any beyond that hospitality which it was usual to show to a stranger, the other guests, who were chiefly Pharisees and lawyers, were prepared to notice with close and invidious attention what Jesus said or did.

There was a man present who had the dropsy ; and Jesus took the unusual course of asking them whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day. They made no answer, probably because they had heard of his unanswerable replies to former objectors, and partly because they knew that the intention to prosecute Him as a Sabbath-breaker had been abandoned, that proceedings might be taken against Him on the still more serious charge of blasphemy. He then healed the man ; and as they had made no objection before, they could not with any decency censure the act after it had been performed. This is the only instance of healing on the Sabbath-day that passed without express animadversion.

Jesus had taken notice what solicitude the guests had manifested to secure the chief or most honourable places at the dinner table. The nature of this table has been lately explained : a couch enclosing three sides of a square, which contained the table. The place of honour was beside the host, on the middle couch, which lay along the upper end of the table. Of this post of honour it is on record that the rabbis of that age were remarkably ambitious, claiming it as a tribute due to their superior wisdom. Our Lord, who did not deem the common courtesies of social life unworthy his attention, took occasion to remark on the essential unfitness of this claim, and to rebuke the forward arrogance for which Pharisees were notorious. He pointed out the humiliation to which such conduct might be exposed ; as in the case of the master telling a person who had intruded himself into a seat to which he had no claim, to go down lower, when a more distinguished guest arrived ; whereas, by the contrary conduct, by taking a place below his claims, the entertainer might be induced to say, 'Friend, go up higher.' This was argument and illustration well suited to the men. He was far, however, from recommending the 'pride that apes humility ;' for He immediately proceeded to ennoble the illustration by a grand maxim of conduct, applicable to both temporal and spiritual life : 'For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' He then pointed out

with how little favour God regarded the lavish expenditure which the rich made in this way upon each other, mainly for selfish views, while so little care was taken to feed the hungry and succour the destitute. And at last He led the subject into higher and more spiritual regions, in the striking parable of the Great Supper. We scarcely know a finer instance, even in the Bible, of the progressive advancement of the sense of the discourse, through all its stages, from the commonest to the highest matters.

On another occasion, noticing the alacrity which the crowds evinced in following Him wherever He went, He turned round and told them it was no light matter to become his follower indeed ; for no one could become truly his, who was not ready, if need should occur, to leave for his sake all that flesh and blood hold dear.

By this time the publicans and sinners began to perceive that our Lord did not regard them with disfavour—that He did not treat them with the scorn and pride which they had to bear from the ordinary religious teachers of that day, and, indeed, from all who called themselves respectable. They therefore gathered to Him, and listened to Him with eagerness. They then found that He had not the least objection to associate with them, or even to take food with them. This filled the Pharisees with disgust, which our Lord rebuked, and at the same time justified his own conduct, in the beautiful parables of the Lost Sheep, the Piece of Silver, and the Prodigal Son.

He then turned to those of the publicans and sinners who had become his disciples, and in the parable of the Unjust Steward warned them against the peculiar dangers to which they were by their position exposed, from the pursuit of worldly gain. The Pharisees—who were, in fact, as greedy after gain as the publicans themselves—heard this parable, and the applicatory remarks that followed, with unconcealed derision. Jesus therefore again addressed himself to them, in the ever-memorable parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Another time Jesus strongly enforced upon his disciples the necessity of their manifesting a sincere reluctance to 'giving

offence'—that is, throwing any stumbling-blocks, by their conduct and deportment, in the way of others ; and of their showing truly forgiving tempers towards each other. It is evident that these two rules taken together—a reluctance to *give* offence, and a backwardness in *taking* offence—must be most effectual for securing harmony and peace among a body of Christian people. It is, however, difficult in the extent indicated ; and the disciples feeling this, very properly cried, 'Lord, increase our faith.' This led Him to illustrate the importance and potency of faith, and of that true humbleness of mind which claims no merit for all that can be done or suffered in the cause of God.

One day as He approached a village, ten lepers cried to Him from afar, entreating Him to have mercy upon them. The circumstances are much the same as in the case of the single leper formerly cured in Galilee—with this difference, that they were not healed at once, but were directed to go and show themselves to the priest, according to the law. By this it would seem that their faith had been less evident in the first instance, than in the case of the man who had formerly been healed ; and it was, therefore, subjected to this small trial. The direction presupposed that they would be cured by the time they reached Jerusalem. If they believed this, they would go thither ; if they doubted, they would not consider it worth their while. They all, however, went, and all were cured as they proceeded on their way. With joyful hearts they hastened to claim from the priest formal deliverance from their sad estate. All hastened on save one. He lingered, and then turned back, even to the postponement of the full measure of his happiness, that he might pour out the gratitude of a full heart at the feet of his Deliverer. This man was a Samaritan. When he again came to Jesus, our Lord took notice of the deep and earnest emotion with which he glorified God, and poured forth his thanks. He noticed, also, that this was the only one who had returned. 'Were there not ten cleansed?' He asked ; 'but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save *this stranger*.' Then He said en-



couragingly to the man, 'Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.'

The answer of our Lord to the Pharisees who asked Him when the kingdom of God—that is, the Messiah's kingdom—would come, and the parables of the Importunate Widow and of the Pharisee and Publican, mark the subsequent steps of this important journey.

Farther on some mothers brought their little children for his blessing, probably as He was leaving some village; but the women were churlishly repulsed by the disciples, who were listening to a discourse which must have been of deep interest to them, on the too common practice of divorce. When Jesus noticed this action, He told them, with some severity, to allow the children to come to Him, 'for of such,' He said, 'is the kingdom of heaven.' And He drew them to Him, taking some in his arms, and bestowed upon them his blessing—a blessing of more worth than the spoil of empires, but the full value of which was, probably, not well understood by the mothers. They were, it is likely, such women as still in the East covet earnestly for their little ones the blessing of some great teacher or holy man.

When He was still advancing on this journey, a rich young man came to Jesus, professing his readiness to follow Him; but went away greatly disheartened, when he was told to sell all he had, and to distribute the proceeds among the poor. To cast aside the world to this extent, he was not, with all his zeal, prepared; nor did he count our Lord's assurance that he should have treasure in heaven a sufficient compensation. Yet he went away sorrowful to find a bar which his faith was not able to surmount, opposed to his intentions. Jesus looked after him with concern as he departed, and said, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' This metaphor has seemed difficult. The gates of towns had often narrow side entrances, through which only passengers on foot could pass. Any one who has seen Temple Bar, or the gates

Of many of our old towns, will understand this very well. Now these side passages were, and are still, in some parts called ‘needles’ eyes;’ and, therefore, it is probable that our Lord’s expression has reference to the difficulty which a large and tall



beast, like a camel laden with baggage, would find in attempting to pass through one of these side passages reserved for pedestrians.

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Bethany is one of the most interesting spots hallowed by the presence of the Son of Man. It was his home during his periodical visits to Jerusalem. Some of the most touching incidents of his private life occurred there. What Capernaum was in Galilee, Bethany was in Judæa. After the labours of the day in the great city; after the turmoil of its crowded thoroughfares, and the wanton insults of its fanatical populace; it must have been sweet to the Saviour’s troubled spirit to walk over Olivet in the still evening or starry night, and seek repose and sympathy in the peaceful home and genial society of Martha and Mary.

I have often visited Bethany; and perhaps it may not be uninteresting to the reader of Dr. Kitto’s graphic narrative, to embody here some notes penned on the spot, and already recorded in another work:—

‘What particularly struck me, in all my visits to Bethany, was its solitude. It looks as if it were shut out from the whole world. No town, village, or human habitation is visible from it. The “wilder-ness” appears in front through an opening in the rocky glen; and the steep side of Olivet rises close behind. When Jesus retired

from Jerusalem to Bethany, no sound of the busy world followed Him, no noisy crowd broke in upon his meditation. In the quiet home of Martha, or in some lonely recess of Bethany's secluded dell, He rested and prayed. How delighted I was one evening, when seated on a rocky bank beside the village, reading the story of Lazarus, to hear a passing villager say, "There is the tomb of Lazarus, and yonder is the house of Martha!" They may not be, most probably are not, the real places; but this is Bethany, and the miracle wrought there eighteen centuries ago still dwells in the memory of its inhabitants. And as the unvarying features of nature are there too—the cliffs, the secluded glen, the Mount of Olives,—few will think of traditional holy places. From the spot where I sat, I saw, as Martha and Mary had seen from their housetop, those blue mountains beyond Jordan, where Jesus was abiding when they sent for Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." I also saw the road "from Jerusalem to Jericho" winding past the village, and away down the rocky declivities into the wilderness. By that road Jesus was expected; and one can fancy with what earnest, longing eyes the sisters looked along it; ever and anon returning and looking, from the first dawn till waning twilight. And when at last He did come, and Martha heard the news, how she ran along that road, and, with streaming eyes and quivering lips, uttered the half-reproachful and still half-hopeful cry, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!"

'Bethany is now, and apparently always was, a small, poor, mountain hamlet; with no charm except its seclusion, and no interest save its associations. It is a remarkable fact that Christ's great miracle has been to it as a new baptism, conferring a new name. It is now called *El-Azariyeh*, which may be interpreted "the place of Lazarus." The palms are all gone which gave it its old name, *Beth-any*, "House of dates;" but the crags around, and the terraced slopes above it, are dotted yet with venerable fig-trees, as if to show that its sister village *Beth-phage*, "House of figs," is not forgotten, though its site is lost.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Giant Cities of Bashan*, p. 165.

**Thirty-eighth Week—Fifth Day.**

## JESUS AT JERICO.

MATT. XX. 17-34; MARK X. 32-52; LUKE XVIII. 31-XIX. 27.

It was formerly stated that the pilgrims from Galilee to Jerusalem at the Passover, very generally went by the route on the other side the Jordan, in order to avoid passing through Samaria. As that festival was now at hand, large bodies of pilgrims were already on the move from Galilee as well as from Perea; and Jesus fell in with this crowd in getting near the point where they usually passed the Jordan, and to which the different streams of travellers of necessity converged.

The disciples now distinctly perceived that their Master intended to proceed with the pilgrims to Jerusalem; and they held back in dismay, knowing that his destruction had been determined on by the ruling authorities there. Perceiving this, Jesus took them aside, not to remove their fears as groundless, but to confirm their worst apprehensions. He hid nothing from them; He palliated nothing. He announced his betrayal, and mentioned the very persons to whom He should be betrayed, namely, the scribes and Pharisees. He foretold his condemnation to death, his delivery to the Gentiles, his mockings and scourgings, his crucifixion, and his resurrection on the third day. The time was coming when they would understand all this well enough; but the evangelist plainly declares that they could not then comprehend it. They believed their Master to be the Messiah; and although their original views as to the nature of his kingdom had been considerably modified by what they had from time to time heard from Him, they still regarded it as essentially a temporal kingdom, to be presently established; and were unable to connect with the Messiah's person the ideas of humiliation, suffering, and death. It was also unaccountable to them, why He, knowing so clearly what awaited Him at Jerusalem, should persist in proceeding thither, If they had duly pondered *all* that they had heard

from Him, the bitter as well as the sweet, they would not now have been much at a loss ; but they had, for the present, left shut up in the darker chambers of their memory, all but what they liked to remember.

It was soon perceived by the disciples that a large portion of the crowd of pilgrims were favourably disposed towards Jesus, and quite ready to hail Him as the King Messiah : there seemed, indeed, to be a general expectation that at this Pass-over some great event would occur, and that He would at length stand forward openly in assertion of his Messianic claims. They perceived also with joy that their Master did not, as usual, avoid the attentions of the people, or labour to dispel their expectations. The fact is, that it was part of the divine plan that He should, by his public entry into Jerusalem, claim the Messiahship as his right, and that this claim should be recognised by the people, before the final scenes.

This being the case, the disciples presently forgot what their Lord had been saying to them, and fixed their attention and their hopes upon visions of that power and glory, which they conceived the public enthusiasm would in a few days compel Him to assume.

It is only in view of this still unsubdued worldliness on the part of the disciples, that we can understand the incident which follows, and which all the evangelists agree in placing just after the prediction which Jesus delivered to his disciples.

Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children—that is, of John and James—presented herself with the profoundest homage before Jesus, and asked of Him a promise to grant whatever she might ask. Our Lord declined to make any such promise, and desired to know at once what it was she required ; and it then came out to be nothing less than this : that her two sons should sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom,—evidently meaning, in the grand Messianic kingdom He was about to establish. The purport was that they should, by his special favour, occupy the highest places, the places nearest to Him, in that kingdom. The brothers had either instigated this application of their mother, or had

sanctioned it at her instigation. We incline to the latter view, as the application has altogether a *motherly* aspect. Still, James and John had made it theirs, and to *them* Jesus addressed himself. He told them, 'Ye know not what ye ask;' and presently the ignorance and presumptuous confidence of the two brothers were more manifestly shown. Jesus asked them, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' In this question was involved no less than one touching their spiritual strength, and their capacity to suffer as their Master suffered. Yet they heedlessly and rashly answered, 'We are able.' But in his gracious indulgence to their weakness, Jesus passed over all this without notice, and immediately answered that they should indeed be partakers of his sufferings; and although He withheld any direct information exclusively relating to themselves (as distinct from their brethren of the apostolic company), still, as He had on a former occasion intimated, He now repeated, that special honours and dignities were to exist in his *future* kingdom, and should assuredly be given to those of his servants and saints for whom God had prepared them, to be their honour and everlasting reward.<sup>1</sup>

The other apostles were indignant at the attempt of the sons of Zebedee to attain the superiority over them. Perceiving this, Jesus told them, that although 'the kings of the earth' gave such distinctions to their favourites as those to which the sons of Zebedee aspired, it would not be so now among them; for in his *immediate* kingdom, he would be the greatest who should be the most holy and most useful—most the servant of all.

As Jesus, with the pilgrim crowd, approached Jericho, a blind man, the son of Timeus, and therefore called Bartimeus (*Bar* meaning 'son'), who sat begging by the way-side, heard the tramp of many feet, and inquired what it all meant. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. No sooner did he catch that name, with which the nation now rang: from

<sup>1</sup> See more fully on this transaction, *Life and Character of St. John*, by the Rev. FRANCIS TRENCH. London, 1850.

side to side, than he began to cry aloud, with the passionate earnestness of one who feared that to be unheard now was to lose his only hope, 'Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those who passed told him to hold his peace, and not with his base cries disturb the triumphant march of the Messianic King. But the great need of his life was at stake; for having heard of the cure at Jerusalem of the man born blind—and who had not heard of that?—he had no doubt that to gain the attention of Jesus was to be healed. His faith was entire, both in the power of Jesus to heal, and in his character as the 'Son of David,' the title by which the Messiah was best known. He therefore cried the more loudly and vehemently, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!' And the Son of David heard him, and stood still, and commanded him to be called. Then those who were near to him said, 'Be of good comfort, rise: He calleth thee!' And at that word, he sprung to his feet; and casting off the loose upper garment which impeded his blind steps, and which people usually laid aside when they ran or laboured, he hastened, as he never before had hastened, impelled from one kind hand to another, till he stood before the Redeemer. 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' was the question that Jesus asked. The man had only cried for 'mercy' before, and he is now required to name the special mercy that he craved. It was, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus, who seems to have always manifested a special tenderness for the blind, had compassion upon him, and said, 'Receive thy sight.' And by that word of power his cure was instantly effected. The man who had hitherto been tied by his infirmity to one place, was now free to go where he listed; and he chose well; for he chose to follow Jesus by the way, glorifying God, and being the occasion that others also glorified his name.

Jericho, then a large and important city, was itself stirred at the approach of Jesus with the pilgrim host. Among the inhabitants was Zaccheus, the chief of the publicans or tax-gatherers in that district, their supervisor, to whom they rendered their accounts. He was very rich, as he might well be

most so profitable, and affording so many opportunities of  
tion. This person felt a strong desire to see Jesus, of  
the kindness to his despised order he had, doubtless, heard  
of from other publicans, and who, in fact, had a publican  
among his chosen friends and followers. But how could he  
see Him? Jesus would not be likely to pass his house; nor

He travel in any state, in palanquin, or upon horse or  
mule, so as to be seen from far, but walked on foot along  
the dusty roads, undistinguished, probably, in stature or ap-  
pearance from the crowds around Him. Besides, Zaccheus  
himself was a little man, who could not even thrust his way  
through a crowd, or look over the heads of others. His anxiety  
to see the good Prophet of Nazareth, was however so strong,  
that he mounted one of the trees—a sycamore-tree, that grew  
beside the road which Jesus must pass,—taking the example  
probably from the boys, who had doubtless ‘manned,’ for the  
occasion, all the trees overlooking the road; for boys are boys  
everywhere, and in all ages, the most ancient things existing,  
being the same now as they were two thousand or five thousand  
years ago. Zaccheus himself was but a boy in stature, and  
therefore the better suited for the post he had chosen; and  
even the Jericho boys would hardly venture to dispute a seat  
with the terrible little publican, whom their fathers regarded  
with dread.

Zaccheus had his heart’s desire. He saw Jesus; and what  
was of more consequence to his welfare, Jesus saw him. Per-  
haps it was at the moment that a feeling of adhesion to Christ  
was rising up and filling his heart that Jesus looked up, and,  
*accosting him by his name*, said, ‘Zaccheus, make haste, and  
come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house,’ that is, for  
the remainder of the day, and till He should resume his journey  
the next morning. A glad man was Zaccheus then; he came  
down briskly from the tree, and with a joyful heart conducted  
Jesus to his house. If Jesus had sought honour of men, this  
stroke at the particular time would have been injurious to Him.  
As it was, there was a general murmur of disapprobation among  
the people, that He, whom they were prepared to regard as



entitled to the highest place on earth, should so demean himself as to become the guest of one who was 'a sinner.'

What took place in the house of Zaccheus is not fully reported by the evangelist ; but the result is given, and it is such as to show that the publican profited well by the divine teachings he was now enabled to receive from the mouth of Jesus. Clearly he was a more promising pupil than the rich young man who had lately turned back from Him. He stood forth and declared that he would give half he possessed to feed the poor, and that in any case where he had used for unjust gain the power entrusted to him, he would make compensation fourfold. In our days he would probably have expressed himself as meaning to restore principal and interest ; but the law forbade the Jews to take interest of one another. The same law required a fourfold restitution, upon conviction, from a man who stole a sheep ; but he had only to add one-fifth of the value, when, without being detected or tried, he made a voluntary confession of his offence. Zaccheus, therefore, shows the unflinching character of his repentance, by voluntarily subjecting himself to the stringent penalties incurred only by a conviction in the courts of law. Some have thought that he speaks of his ordinary past conduct—of what he had been in the habit of doing—instead of his intentions for the future. But surely he would never have got rich, if he had, as alleged, been in the habit of making extortions, and then restoring fourfold. In that case, also, such a recapitulation of his own meritorious conduct would have savoured much of pharisaic self-righteousness, and would have been little likely to draw from our Saviour the declaration : '*This day is salvation come to this house ; for that he also is a son of Abraham ;*' adding, for the benefit of those who had murmured at his attention to publicans, '*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*'

It was before he left Jericho that our Lord sought to correct the views which He saw that the disciples had speedily resumed, notwithstanding his warning announcements. For this purpose He declares the parable of the Ten Pounds, in which He illustrates his present and future coming, by that of a king, who

first comes to take account of his servants in gentleness and condescension ; but, when he has been despised and rejected by them, next comes in irresistible might, to reward his faithful servants and execute judgment upon his enemies.

### Thirty-eighth Week—Sixth Day.

#### THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

MATT. XXI. 1-17 ; MARK XI. 1-11 ; LUKE XIX. 29-44 ;

JOHN XII. 12-19.

WE are informed by St. John that our Lord arrived at Bethany six days, or rather on the sixth day, before the Passover. It is always to be remembered that the Jews counted the *commencement* of their days at sunset, as all the oriental nations do still ; so that with them night precedes day, instead of following it as with us. Now, the Passover was on Friday night—that is, on the night *preceding* the day on which our Lord was crucified, and *following* the day of Thursday ; or, more briefly, on what would have been, by our reckoning, Thursday night. Counting back from this to the sixth antecedent day, we come to Saturday ; on which day, therefore, it was that our Lord reached Bethany. Every day that follows teems with circumstances of deep interest, which must now engage our attention.

It seems that our Lord came from Jericho, or from some intermediate place, with his own party only,—the pilgrims having preceded Him on the journey, and gone forward to Jerusalem. Jesus probably arrived at Bethany towards evening, and resolved to remain there with his friend Lazarus over night, and to proceed to Jerusalem in the morning.

There was a great excitement concerning Jesus at Jerusalem. The still recent miracle of the raising of Lazarus was the standing topic of conversation in the city, as the strangers coming in were eager to know all that they could learn concerning it ; while the Jerusalemites were naturally anxious to tell these eager listeners all that they knew or thought of the transaction.

We may be very sure that any one who had been actually present on that occasion, found himself a great man in these days. The sensation excited by this miracle among the strangers was very great, and even the Jerusalemites felt their own interest in it revive under this external influence. It was also known that the Sanhedrim had determined upon our Lord's destruction ; and so far from making any secret of this, they had given public notice that any one who knew where He was to be found, should give information, in order that He might be apprehended. Thus, while the enthusiasm in his favour was in its most excited state, the machinations against Him attained the most determinate vigour, and both friends and enemies felt that the crisis of his career was come. It was only left for Him to reign or to perish. The pilgrims from the way of Jericho brought the first tidings of his approach ; and soon it was known throughout the city that He had arrived at Bethany. It was to be expected that He would come over to Jerusalem on the morrow ; but without waiting for this, there was an instant rush of people to Bethany, not only to see Jesus, but to behold Lazarus—the living evidence of his power—a power not hitherto witnessed on earth : and, certainly, to behold a man who had been four days in the grave—four days DEAD—was no ordinary sight, and well worth going two miles to see. In fact, the impression made by this miracle, resting as it did on the most unquestionable evidence, was so strong, and led so many to feel that He who had wrought such a work could be no other than the Messiah, that the Sanhedrim was led to seek the destruction of Lazarus also, as one whose mere existence was a standing testimony in favour of Jesus, and was felt to be such by the numerous persons who resorted to Bethany. What was eventually done in regard to Lazarus we know not. Probably, it was not considered worth while to molest him after their main design had been accomplished. But, from this point, it is well to bear in mind, that the ruling authorities at Jerusalem have fully determined upon our Lord's doom, and stand watching for a favourable opportunity of carrying their purpose into execution.

It may be asked, why did they not send over to Bethany and apprehend Him? The answer is, that they dared not. That place was by this time thronged with people highly excited in his favour, and prepared to hail with acclamations any claims He might advance ; and in the city itself the general feeling ran high in his favour. It was, therefore, impossible openly to seize his person by any force they could command, or without the danger of raising a popular commotion, which, from dread of the Romans, they were most anxious to avoid.

The next morning (Sunday) Jesus left Bethany, accompanied by a host of people, whose disposition to regard Him as proceeding to take possession of David's throne was unmistakably displayed. Of this enthusiasm in his favour, though He knew it to be transient, Jesus purposed to avail himself, in order to manifest in the most open manner his claim to be the King anointed from on high, to whom the prophets had borne witness, and to announce, in the most effectual way, that the kingdom of God had indeed come. He had, it is true, advanced this claim often, so that the sincere and the discerning could not fail to understand Him ; yet not always so plainly as that unwilling ears should be compelled to understand that this claim was made, whether they admitted it or not. The time for this was now come ; the end was at hand ; and it behoved Him not to quit the world, leaving to any, then or after, the excuse that He had not declared himself plainly. That Jesus was not, as some allege, *driven* to this by the urgent enthusiasm of the people, but that He willingly entered into it, is shown by the more than passive part He took in the proceedings, by his vindication of the act to the murmuring Pharisees, and by the consideration, that if such had been his wish, he could easily have withdrawn himself from the multitude, as on former occasions, and have privately entered the city. Drawing nearer to Jerusalem, Jesus mounted the unbroken colt of an ass, not only that He might be better seen, but in conformity with the prophecy of Zechariah : ' Fear not, daughter of Sion : behold thy King cometh sitting on an ass's colt.' We have more than once mentioned that no idea of degradation or humiliation is

attached in the East to riding upon an ass. It is a beast, the ideas connected with which are those of peace, in contrast with the prancing horses of war. It is, therefore, much preferred by men of peaceful pursuits and sacred functions ; and our Lord's adoption of it for his triumphal entry, significantly hinted to the people the real nature of his kingdom. Animals not previously used for labour, were accounted specially pure and fit for sacred services. Hence only oxen unused to the yoke were offered on the altar. This serves to explain why a beast was on this occasion chosen 'whereon yet never man sat.' The ass was borrowed for the service by the disciples, according to their Lord's direction, at a village near the road, being willingly lent by the owner when he knew for whose use it was intended ; and some of the disciples having thrown their outer garments over its back, Jesus mounted, and was escorted towards the city with royal honours, and with shouts due to kings.

When the procession appeared upon the brow of the Mount, another great band went forth from the city, and the two met on the way. There was a moment's parley ; and when the men from Bethany assured the new-comers that all which had been reported concerning the raising of Lazarus was true, they not only joined the shout and the triumph, but while some hurried to strew the young branches gathered from the adjoining trees along his path, others flung their robes before his feet. These are old, and, in the East, still subsisting modes of rendering homage to kings and conquerors.

Descending the Mount of Olives, the disciples, who deemed that the long-desired hour had at length come, 'began to rejoice, and praise God for all the mighty works that they had seen ;' and then proceeded, joined by the multitude, to raise the cries, taken from the Psalms, which were regarded by all the Jews as appropriate to the Messiah, and suitable to hail his appearance:

'Hosanna !

Blessed is the King of Israel,

That cometh in the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the kingdom of our father David,

That cometh in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest !'

It is likely that the swelling sound of this mighty cry, the deep significance of which was well known to all who heard it, reached even the Sanhedrim in the temple, and struck them with fear. Some of the Pharisees had mingled with the crowd, and they could not contain themselves when they heard this, but, fearless of the danger of exasperating the people, they called upon Jesus to repress the unseemly demonstrations of his followers. He answered that the event was of such deep importance, as might well raise even the dullest minds to celebrate it. The expression of gladness was proper, and ought not to be restrained. This was conveyed in the phrase, doubtless proverbial: 'I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.' Then the living stream poured on, and the shouts became louder and more joyous, the nearer the city was approached.

Yet there was a pause—a solemn pause, upon the declivity of the hill, as He looked upon that city which He now visited for the last time; and in a few sentences of strong emotion, evinced even by tears, He expressed his grief for the ruinous overthrow which awaited it, and which even He could not avert, seeing that his voice had been disregarded in its streets.

The procession then moved on, and entered the gates of Jerusalem. The city, crowded at this time with strangers in addition to the inhabitants, was stirred by this triumphing clamour, and men asked one another, Who is this? and when they heard, 'It is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth,' no further explanation was needed. The crowd passed on to the temple. Here its shouts were for a while hushed. Here, doubtless, Jesus would, by some magnificent, perhaps terrible demonstration of his power, convince even the gainsayers, who could not then but join the excited people in hailing Him as King. This probably was the general expectation—even that of the disciples. At least, He would make some strong oration, claiming his full rights, and proceeding at once to act upon them, able as He doubtless was by his deeds to vindicate all his claims, and to confound all his adversaries! But nothing of this ensued. What He did was to heal the blind and lame,

who, as soon as they heard of his arrival, hastened to present themselves before Him in the temple. Jesus had, however, accustomed the people to regard *such* acts as ordinary matters, and public expectation was not satisfied. But the young people present, less hardened and more susceptible, were abundantly satisfied; and their fresh youthful hearts being suitably impressed by those manifestations of pity for calamity, and power to relieve it, they took up the dropped cry with their thin voices, and the temple cloisters echoed with 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

Several members of the Sanhedrim were present; and although they dared not as yet take any open measures for stemming the torrent of popular enthusiasm which had set in so strongly in favour of Jesus, their hearts were filled with fear, rage, and envy, and they would not let pass any opportunity of cavilling at his proceedings, or of turning the direction of the stream. 'Hearest thou what these say?' He answered, as was usual with Him, by a quotation from Scripture, to which there could be no reply, 'Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?' They were offended that even children should take up this cry; but the answer showed that even children might lift up their voices in praise to God.

The enthusiasm which had been this day manifested, was somewhat checked by the absence of the expected conclusion. If Jesus had taken it at the tide, it might have led to signal results; but He had other aims, and suffered the opportunity to pass. This was a great disappointment, not only to the crowd, but to the disciples. Still, what had not been done to-day might be done to-morrow; and thus every day gave birth to new expectations, which were not destined to be realized.

Jesus returned in the evening to Bethany, and spent the night there.

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Our Lord reached Bethany from Jericho on the evening of Friday after sunset, or on the morning of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath; and on the next day He made his triumphal entry into

Jerusalem. It was the Passover week. The Holy City was crowded ; and the fame of Jesus, and the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, brought multitudes to Bethany. Jesus knew that the time was now come for the fulfilment of prophecy, and that Zion's King should that day in triumph enter Zion's gates. Knowing what was before Him, it was natural He should take the easy road round the southern shoulder of Olivet, and not the rugged path over the summit. When setting out from Bethany there was nothing either in dress or mien to distinguish Jesus from others. Prophecy declared that He should be meek and lowly, and He was meek and lowly. The little band of humble disciples gathered closely round his person, while the multitude thronged the path, and lined the rocky banks above it. Soon after leaving Bethany, the road meets a ravine which furrows deeply the hill-side. From its eastern brow the top of Zion is seen ; but the rest of the city is hid by an intervening ridge. Just opposite this spot, on the other side of the ravine, are the ruins of an ancient village. The road now turns sharply to the right, descends obliquely to the bottom of the ravine, and then turning to the left, ascends to the top of the ridge a short distance above the site of the village. Was it not when Jesus reached the brow of this ravine that He said to the two disciples, 'Go into *the village over against you*?' These active footmen could cross the ravine direct in a minute or two, while the triumphal procession would wind slowly round the road. The villagers saw the procession ; they knew its cause, for the story of Lazarus had reached them ; they were thus prepared to give the ass to the disciples as soon as they heard 'the Lord hath need of him.' And the disciples taking the ass, led it up to the road and met Jesus. A temporary saddle was soon made out of the loose robes of the people, such as I have myself seen made a hundred times in Palestine. Some broke down branches of the palms and threw them in the path ; others, more enthusiastic, spread their garments in the way, as I have seen Mohammedan devotees do before a distinguished saint.

The procession advanced. The crown of the ridge was gained, and the whole city of Jerusalem burst suddenly on the view. From no point does it look so imposing. Even yet it forms a grand picture. Moriah was in the foreground, rising from the deep, dark Kidron, and crowned by its gorgeous temple. Zion rose higher still beyond it, showing to advantage the palace of Herod, and the lofty battlements of the ancient citadel. The multitude now looking on



their beloved city, and on their wonder-working King, lifted their voices in a long, loud shout of triumph: 'Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!'

But how was Jesus affected by these joyous acclamations, and by that noble view? His eye looked beneath the exuberance of enthusiasm—in upon the evil heart of unbelief. It looked, too, from the gorgeous buildings of the city, away down the dark vista of time, and saw looming sadly in the future, ruin, desolation, and woe. It looked until tears dimmed the vision, and from the swelling heart the sorrowful prophetic words burst forth:

'If thou hadst known, e'en thou,  
At least in this thy day,  
The message of thy peace! But now  
'Tis past for aye away.'

### *Thirty-eighth Week—Seventh Day.*

#### THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

MATTHEW XXI. 12—XXII. 14; MARK XI. 12—XII. 12;

LUKE XIX. 45—XXI.

THE country between Jerusalem and Bethany is very rich in figs. Indeed the village of Bethphage, interposed between the two places, derived its name, which means 'house' or 'place of figs,' from this circumstance, and it is quite likely that the incident before us occurred there.

Passing over to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus felt hungry. As this fact implies that the party had not breakfasted before leaving Bethany, it seems at the first view to speak but poorly for the hospitality of the good people there. The fact is, however, that with the Orientals the breakfast hour is late in the forenoon; and as our Lord's time waxed short, and He had important business to transact at Jerusalem, it was not to be supposed that He would remain at Bethany till breakfast was past. Martha at least, it may be hinted, might have prepared the morning meal earlier, from a regard to these circumstances.

But besides that a guest, and especially such a guest as Jesus, would not allow any serious derangement of the family customs on his account, it was considered unbecoming to take the morning meal before the hour of morning sacrifice, which was at nine o'clock ; so that, taking all things into view, our Lord could not have reached Jerusalem till nearly eleven o'clock, if He had tarried at Bethany for the earliest breakfast He could have.<sup>1</sup>

Being hungry, our Lord went up to a fig-tree which presented an unusual show of leaves for the season, 'if haply He might find fruit thereon ;' but when He reached it, nothing was found but leaves, 'for,' adds the evangelist, 'the time of figs was not yet.' Then Jesus laid upon that tree the doom of utter barrenness in time coming : 'No man eat anything of thee hereafter for ever.'

There are some apparent difficulties in this, such as are not found in any other of our Lord's miracles. If the time of figs was not yet, why should He expect to find fruit on that tree ? and not finding it, why should the tree be condemned for not bearing fruit out of season ?

In seeking an answer, we must remember that this took place where fig-trees abounded, and where there must have been some particular appearance about this tree to excite the expectation of finding fruit upon it. This appearance we have not to go far to seek. It was full of leaves, which was not the case with the others ; for the Jewish writers attest that the leaves of the fig-tree *began* to make their appearance at the time of the Passover ; and our Lord himself represents the appearance of leaves on the fig-tree as a sign of near summer. (Matt. xxiv. 32.) This tree, therefore, had the peculiar appearance of possessing an ample dress of foliage, while the other trees were comparatively bare. The appearance of the tree warranted the expectation that some edible figs might be found upon it ; for as the *fruit* of the fig-tree appears before the leaf, an advanced state of the foliage warranted the expectation of a correspondingly

<sup>1</sup> Thus : Breakfast at the earliest, 9½ o'clock ; half an hour at breakfast, 10 ; half an hour's walk at least, 10½.

advanced state of the fruit. It is, indeed, a well-known fact that, under certain combinations of favourable circumstances, some fig-trees may be so far in advance of their species, as to offer a few ripe figs many weeks before the full season ; and that *this* tree might be supposed in such a state of forwardness,



is evinced by the appearance of its leaves. It should be added that, although the full fig season is not until June, and it was at this time early in April, the fruit of the fig-tree is fit to be eaten considerably before it is ripe.

There is another kind of fig-tree frequently mentioned by Jewish writers, which always had leaves, and on which the fruits of three seasons were found in different states of progress towards that maturity which was not fully reached till the third year. May it not have been to such a tree that our Lord resorted, attracted by the promise that its foliage held forth ? If so, the clause, ‘the time of figs was not yet,’ may be taken to intimate why He did not expect to find figs on the common fig-trees, but did expect to find them on this.

There is also the sycamore fig-tree, which is always green, and bears fruit at different seasons of the year. This might

offer another alternative ; but we do not ourselves prefer it, because in this tree the appearance of foliage does not justify a strong expectation of fruit.

For the rest, it is clear that our Lord's displeasure against the tree is founded upon its holding forth a promise which it did not fulfil. And the perception of this fact gives a clue to all the circumstances, and removes our Lord's action very far from that idle asperity against a senseless tree which some have ventured to find in this proceeding. It is one of the rare instances in which our Lord, after the manner of the old prophets, teaches by symbolical action.

Yesterday He had bewailed the foreseen desolation of Israel, as having been unfaithful to her covenant promises, and about to frustrate her covenant hopes. To-day He teaches the same fact by symbols. The tree is Israel. He—the same who planted it in times of old—goes to it expecting the fruit which its fair appearance warranted ; but finding none, He pronounces judicially upon it the sentence of destruction. All this was to convey an important instruction, and impress a prophetic teaching ; a consideration which illustrates and dignifies an action, at first view apparently adverse to the general purport and tendency of our Lord's teachings and miracles. It was a prophecy and a warning embodied in material facts.

On our Lord's arrival at the temple this day, He found still in vigorous operation the traffic in the temple courts, which He had rebuked at his first Passover. He therefore did as He had done before—expelling the intruders from the place, with this difference, that his now-established character and position before the people enabled Him to dispense with the 'whip of small cords.' And to those who ventured to question his proceedings He answered, 'Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer ? but ye have made it a den of thieves.'

Apart from this, the present was a quiet day. The Sanhedrim witnessed, indeed, with increasing apprehension the readiness with which the people flocked to Him, and the attention with which they listened to his teaching ; but it durst not yet risk the danger of exciting the passions of the multitude by taking

a posture of open opposition. Jesus also was wary. He preached boldly, but was careful they should not take Him at disadvantage in the temple ; the crowd of followers there was an adequate shield for Him, and every night He left the city, and proceeded to Bethany. Had He lodged in the town, means might have been found of surrounding the house, and making Him prisoner.

On proceeding to the city the next day, the disciples observed that the doomed tree had altogether withered away. It had doubtless been in the same state the evening before ; as it was after nightfall, however, they had not been able to notice its condition. But their astonishment at seeing how soon the fig-tree had withered, afforded our Lord an occasion to instruct them in the nature and power of faith.

Meanwhile, the Sanhedrim seems to have concluded that things could not be allowed to go on as they had done, and that it had become absolutely necessary to make a strong effort to discredit Jesus with the multitude. Different persons were therefore appointed to try Him with hard questions, in the hope that his answers to problems expressly framed to bring Him into antagonism with public opinion, on matters where the people were most sensitive, would cause a revulsion of feeling to his disadvantage.

First, He was asked by what authority He dared to act as He had done, in thus taking [possession of the temple, as it were, for his own purposes, and assuming an authority to which they could not be expected to submit. But Jesus easily extricated himself from this snare, and caught them, as it were, in their own toils. He said they had asked Him a question, and He would ask one also of them ; and if they answered his, He would answer theirs : ‘The baptism of John, is it of heaven or of men?’ They were completely nonplussed by this question. It was the firm opinion of the people that John was a prophet sent from God, and the veneration for his character had acquired strength, since his death had made him a martyr to righteousness and truth against Herodian tyranny and wickedness. To say that his mission was merely self-imposed, had been a gross

and suicidal outrage to public opinion ; but to admit that it was of God, laid them open, as they perceived, to the retort, Why then did ye not believe him? why not believe the testimony he bore of me? They therefore declined to answer ; and the people felt that Jesus on his part was justified in declining to answer the interrogatory they had put to Him. Nor was this the only rebuff they encountered ; for they had to listen to a doctrine the most unpalatable to them—that their boasted privileges were nought, and would soon be taken away from them, and given to those who would deserve them better. In the parables of the Two Sons, the Wicked Husbandmen, and the Marriage of the King's Son, this lesson was not obscurely taught.



## Thirty-ninth Week—First Day.

### QUESTIONINGS.

MATT. XXII. 15-46, XXV. ; MARK XII. 13-XIII. 37 ;  
LUKE XX. 20-XXI. 38.

THE next day being Wednesday, our Lord went over, as usual, to Jerusalem.

This was eminently a day of questions.

The Pharisees had meanwhile held a council, and invited the co-operation of the parties to whom, under ordinary circumstances, they were most adverse, but with whom they were inclined to unite in the presence of a common danger. These were the Sadducees and the Herodians, both influential but not very popular parties. The former denied the authority of the pharisaic traditions, and stuck to the simple letter of the law : so far they were likely to be pleased, rather than otherwise, at our Lord's frequent denunciation of those traditions, and of the pharisaic practices founded upon them. But they also disbelieved in the resurrection of the dead, and in the existence of angels; both of which doctrines the Pharisees maintained, in harmony with the teaching of our Lord. The Herodians seem to have been those who were inclined, from interest and policy, to support what remained of the power of the Herodian family in the north and east, as upon the whole the best and least dependent form of government that could be hoped for, under the existing circumstances of the country. This family, it is true, was not popular in Judea, but the co-operation of the Herodians being desired, it would not be difficult to show that if Jesus succeeded in the objects ascribed to Him, the Herodian family must soon lose all power and influence in Palestine. However much the views of these three parties differed in general, they could easily be brought

to apprehend that the alleged pretensions of Jesus, sanctioned by a popular movement, which seemed to be on the eve of breaking out, must be ruinous to their authority if He succeeded; and if He failed—as fail He must, sooner or later—would bring down upon them the power of the Romans, to the utter destruction of their civil rights and their hierarchy, and perhaps to the subversion of their nationality itself. The destruction of Jesus had already been determined on; but how it was to be accomplished, was still as much a question as it had ever been. Surrounded as He was by admiring crowds, quite ready to hail Him as their King, any attempt to seize Him openly would only hasten the crisis which seemed to them impending, and which they were so anxious to avert; and to seize Him privately, his practice of leaving the city in the evening rendered difficult. It was determined, then, to pursue the course of asking Him ensnaring questions; his answers to which might either shake the confidence of the people in Him, or afford some grounds on which He might be denounced to the Roman governor, as an enemy of the state. The latter alternative was the most desirable, because then the odium of all ulterior measures would rest with the Romans; and because the Jews had not themselves the power of inflicting death, while it was doubtful whether these Pagans would inflict it, on their representation, for a merely religious offence.

Hence their first question struck deep into the sore of the nation's heart: 'Is it lawful or not to pay tribute to Cæsar?' If He answered this insidious question in the negative, He would indeed gratify the popular feeling, but would at the same time furnish ground on which to denounce Him to Pilate as a preacher of sedition, whose command over the popular mind made Him a most dangerous enemy to the government. But if He said 'It is lawful,' He would cool or offend the multitude, by pronouncing against that view of their position which the great body of the nation cherished in their hearts, and which many openly avowed. Our Lord saw the snare thus laid for Him, and avoided it with the same admirable address which had confounded them the day before. He asked them to show



Him a piece of money ; and, on a Roman coin being put into his hands, He looked at it, and asked to whom pertained the effigy and inscription that it bore. They answered, to Cæsar ; and He then rejoined quickly, ' Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's '—alluding, perhaps, in the latter clause, to the temple tribute, which He had himself formerly paid, and which was usually paid in Jewish coin, as the other was in Roman.

Those who put this question were probably the Herodians. Their allies seem to have been somewhat daunted by this palpable defeat ; nevertheless they were not driven from their purpose, and the Sadducees advanced to the attack. Their question was framed to put Him between the horns of what seemed an insurmountable dilemma, levelled at the views He was known to entertain, and which was not the less pleasant to them, that it aimed a side blow, at the same time, at their old enemies the Pharisees. They proposed the case of a woman having for her husband seven brothers in succession, all of them dying before her ; and asked whose wife she should be of the seven ' in the resurrection,' seeing that they were all equally her husbands ? The question seems to assume that, since Jesus had upheld the doctrine of the resurrection, his views on the subject were the same as were then generally current, which ascribed a considerably carnal character to the beatitude of the future life. Our Lord's answer both corrected their misconception and broke through their dilemma, by informing them that they erred, ' not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God,' for that in the future life no such relation as that of husband and wife would exist, but a higher and more perfect nature would be taken, assimilated to that of ' the angels of God.' He even went beyond their question, and gave them an unanswerable proof, from that portion of the Old Scripture on which they most relied, from the words which God himself uttered from the bush, that there is a future life, and that those who are dead to man are still alive to God.

The Pharisees enjoyed exceedingly this discomfiture of their old antagonists. This was especially the case with the man

who was to try Jesus on *their* behalf; and with a feeling not wholly invidious he delivered himself of *his* problem. It was, Which is the greatest of all the commandments?

The test here seems to have lain in the fact that, by singling out one of the commandments as the chief and most important, our Lord would seem to cast disrespect on the others—it being the general opinion that all the commandments, even as traced out to their most remote and trivial issues, were of equal importance. But our Lord disposed of all this by giving a summary of the whole of the religious part of the law in a few words: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul.’ This was the primary commandment; and that, however undeniable, it might not be construed into disrespect for the obligations of social law, He added, ‘The second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ The lawyer (for such he was) was struck with admiration at this answer; and, with the sincerity of honest conviction, accepted it, declaring that he believed obedience to these two laws to be ‘more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.’ On hearing this the Pharisees were dismayed, and saw that they had lost their champion, while Jesus looked approvingly upon him, and said, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ Let us hope that he reached it. To be ‘not far from the kingdom of God,’ and yet not to enter therein, is a doom the most unhappy that can befall a man.

Before they had time to recover from this discomfiture, Jesus, in his turn, proposed a question to them: Whose son is the Messiah? The ready answer was, ‘The son of David.’ Then, said He, quoting one of the Messianic Psalms (cx. 1), ‘How doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?’ We can answer this, but they could not. They held down their heads in confusion; and from that day forward no one was hardy enough to ask Him any more questions.

Jesus then turned to the people, pronouncing a terrible denunciation of the Pharisees, and a keen exposure of their

hypocritical pretences, concluding with the same lamentation over Jerusalem, stained with the blood of the prophets, which He had delivered on approaching from Jericho, and declaring that all this blood would be required of the existing generation.

This and other declarations of the day must have had some effect in disabusing the crowd as to his intention of setting up a temporal Messianic kingdom, and of making Jerusalem once more the glory of the earth, and the lady of kingdoms. They had waited from day to day ; and it had now become clear that He did not contemplate any such demonstration as they expected, and were ready to uphold. Many still wavered ; many were still willing to adhere to Him on any terms ; but, taking the people in the mass, it is here we would place the commencement of that reaction of the public enthusiasm, which was soon to be attended with the most awful results.

There was a pause here ; and Jesus being seated 'over against the treasury,' which we formerly had occasion to mention, noticed the rich men ostentatiously casting in their liberal offerings, when presently a poor widow approached and dropped in 'two mites, which make a farthing,' or rather somewhat less ; and He failed not to call attention to the circumstance, declaring that this gift of the poor woman was really greater, more acceptable to God, than those of the others ; for they had only given some portion of their superabundance, whereas she had offered all she had—even all her living. It was thus that our Lord was ever ready to seize any passing circumstance, which might be made instrumental to the instruction of his followers.

On leaving the temple for the day, the disciples called his attention to the size and beauty of the stones, and the magnificence of the building. He then told them that the time was not distant when of all these stones not one should be left upon another. Afflicted at this intelligence, the disciples walked sadly on ; and when they had reached the Mount of Olives, they paused and looked back upon the city, which lay spread out like a panorama before them. Jesus sat down as if, in the calm sunset, to contemplate that beautiful scene, doomed

so soon to utter ruin and overthrow. The disciples, in deference to his contemplative mood, turned aside ; but presently four of them (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) drew near, and privately asked Him for more full information respecting these things. ' Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ? '—three points on which they had already received various intimations, that had occasioned much speculation among them, and on which they now desired to be more explicitly informed. They wished to know, first, When those terrible things He had spoken against Jerusalem would be accomplished ? What would be the signs of his coming ? ' Coming ' implies previous absence ; so that it would seem these chosen disciples, at least, had concluded, from his repeated intimations, that He was about to leave them (*how*, they were afraid to think), but that He would come again soon—before that generation passed away—to confound his enemies, and establish his kingdom in righteousness. And, What would be the signs of the end of the world ? How nearly or remotely they connected this last question with the preceding we do not know ; probably their ideas on the subject, and, indeed, on all these subjects, were as indistinct as is our own apprehension of *their* meaning. Our Lord's answer to these questions was framed to afford them all the information needful to them, or useful for their guidance, but little to gratify a vague curiosity. Neither did He answer their questions categorically, but so intermingled his replies on each head, that it required after-knowledge and spiritual experience to discriminate more than their safety absolutely required them to know. We can *now* distinguish that He spoke of his coming, not personally, but by the fulfilment of his predictions concerning Jerusalem, and for the final uprooting of that theocracy which had become obstructive to the progress of the gospel ; and again of his final coming to judge the world, of which also they inquired. Much that our Lord said might be applicable to *both* these great events—these ' comings ' both being, in fact, comings to judgment ; but towards the close, his language grew more distinctly applicable to his final coming to judge

the world. He declined, however, to give information respecting *times*, on the ground that these were secrets of God, and that it was more for their profit that they should be kept in a state of wakeful expectancy at all times, than that they should know the days and the hours.

The general subject, and the considerations connected with it, our Lord then proceeded to illustrate by the parables of the Talents and of the Ten Virgins, and closed with a vivid description of the scenes of the last judgment.

### Thirty-ninth Week—Second Day.

JUDAS.

MATT. XXVI. 1-16 ; MARK XIV. 1-11 ; LUKE XXII. 1-6 ;  
JOHN XII. 2-8.

THE evening of the day, of which the incidents were yesterday recorded—Wednesday evening by our mode of computation, Thursday evening by that of the Jews—was spent in circumstances widely different, by the enemies of Christ in Jerusalem, and by himself and his friends at Bethany.

At Bethany a supper was prepared for Him in the house of Simon *the leper*—that is, perhaps, one who had been a leper, and had probably been healed by Jesus. Lazarus was among those who sat at meat ; and we may take notice of this as evidence that there was nothing merely illusive or unreal, as some have alleged, in his being raised from the dead, seeing that, some weeks after that great event, he takes part in a social meal. The circumstance is perhaps marked by the evangelist for the sake of this evidence, and may be compared with our Lord's commanding that food should be given to the damsel He raised from the dead, and with his own participation of food after his resurrection. This is the last we hear of Lazarus in the Gospels ; but there are some traditions concerning him, to which we are at liberty to give what credence we see fit. One of them is, that he was thirty years old when raised from

the dead, and that he survived thirty years more. Another is, that the first question he asked our Lord after leaving the tomb was, whether he was to die again, and that being answered in the affirmative, he never smiled more.

His sisters were also there, though not at the table. The fact that the good, stirring Martha appears in her favourite character of housewife, having charge of the preparations for, and attendance at supper, taken with the presence of all the family, may suggest that there was some near connection between them and Simon. Many conjectures have been offered on this point; but it seems to us likely that the entertainment was really given by Lazarus and his sisters, the neighbouring house of their friend and relative Simon being borrowed for the occasion, their own being under repair, or having no room large enough for the entertainment of so considerable a party. Or, Simon may have recently become a leper, and being, as such, obliged to withdraw from the town, had left his house vacant, under the charge of Lazarus and his sisters, who made use of it for this supper. If Simon himself gave the entertainment, or took a leading part in it, it would have been more direct to say so, than that the entertainment was given in his house. Mary took advantage of this opportunity to signalize her devotion to her Lord, and her reverence for his person, by bestowing upon his head and his feet the contents of a vessel of costly perfumed oil, bending over Him as she did so, and then kneeling down to wipe his feet with her hair. This perfumed oil was of a very costly kind, worth about eight pounds of our money, and had probably been purchased for the occasion. It was an anointing fit for kings, and it is not unlikely that Mary connected with this act some ideas of the approaching assumption of regal honours. In any case, the peculiar odour of this perfume, which instantly pervaded all the house, disclosed its quality and cost. Some of the disciples were not unnaturally distressed at the lavish expenditure of that, the worth of which would have given food to many poor persons, and was in fact equal to a year's wages of a labouring man. But one of them was roused to loudly-expressed indignation. 'Why,' he ex-

claimed, 'why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence (denarii), and given to the poor?' This was Judas Iscariot; and the evangelist throws light on the special intensity of his vexation, by mentioning the fact that he was the treasurer of the party, having charge of the little fund from which their simple wants were supplied, and which furnished the means of charity to the poor. John also flatly charges him with making wrongful appropriations of this common fund to his own private uses; so that it was very important to him that all generous acts of his Lord's friends should take the form of money, to go into the purse of which he was the unworthy bearer; and to that purse certainly the worth of the oil would have been a very acceptable contribution. Avarice is thus, we perceive, the characteristic of Judas's mind—a fact which one who knew him, and had been long his companion, places prominently before us. And whatever else, therefore, we find in this man's dark character, covetousness must be taken as its most distinguishing feature, for we certainly have no right to suppose that we know Judas or can understand him better than John did.

Our Lord vindicated this act of Mary, and, indeed, commended it. He perceived and appreciated in Mary that disposition which is ever ready to make large sacrifices for love; and always meditating on his own death, the more intently as the time was so close at hand, He said, that 'He had this night received, not a regal anointing, but an anticipatory anointing for the tomb—an embalming such as the dead received—a consecration to death.' 'The poor,' He added, 'ye have always with you, but me ye have not always,' meaning that there are certain offices of love which can be rendered only upon extraordinary occasions, and which therefore are not to be estimated by the common standards of judgment. These ought to be done, and the others not neglected.

Judas, who expected that his Master would have supported his view of the case, became gloomy and exasperated at this rebuff; and as it is probable that, although with yearnings for good, he had joined Christ mainly with views of high advance-

ment and great temporal gain in the kingdom He was about to establish, he was not the less vexed by these reiterated intimations of approaching death, which became but too probable from the aspect of affairs, and from our Lord having declined so many recent opportunities of meeting the hopes and expectations of the people. As he moodily pondered these things, 'Satan entered into Judas,' in the shape of a thought, that it was useless to serve such a Master any longer; it might be well to quit Him while there was time to do so, for his followers could hardly escape scathless from the dangers which He declared to be impending over himself; and, indeed, what had He lately been holding out to them but prospects of persecution, trial, and martyrdom? Such prospects did not suit Judas. And since Jesus had made up his mind to perish, and was certain to do so if He persisted in his present views, why might not Judas make some gain of the business? It was well known the Sanhedrim was anxious to find an opportunity of seizing Jesus without danger of public tumult; such an opportunity this man's acquaintance with his Master's resorts would enable him to give them; and he might expect a liberal reward for this service to those who were, after all, the constituted authorities, who had a right to inquire into such matters, and to whom, as a good Jew and a good citizen, his services were due.

There has grown up in these latter days a tendency, which pervades much of our literature, to obscure the barriers of vice and virtue, of nobleness and villany—to make out that the foulest crimes and lowest vices are, in the same man, consistent with high intellect, tender affections, and exalted sentiments. The virtues of villains form the great study with a certain class of writers. Among these villains Judas has found a place; and there are not wanting those who, in the teeth of the evangelist, try to make it clear that he acted from pure and generous motives, and with the best, though, as it happened, mistaken intentions. We have no sympathy with this kind of sentiment; still it may be hard to believe that a man who had been chosen by Christ to the apostleship, and who had so long been in close intimacy with our Lord and his apostles, could be wholly



without good qualities. Even his ultimate repentance may be taken to show that he had susceptibility of truth and right, though for a time kept under by the iron grasp of covetousness. It is therefore just possible that he did deceive himself into the belief, that he was rendering his Master a real service, by placing Him in a position which might compel Him, then and there, to take to himself his great power and reign.

Meanwhile the enemies of Jesus, after the discomfiture of their attempts to ensnare Him by their questions, assembled to consider what next should be done. It was a full meeting of the Sanhedrim, held in the palace of the high priest—*there*, because the temple, where this body usually met, was not open to the courts at night. The result seems to have been, that it remained at least doubtful which side the people would take ; and the attempt was certain to breed some kind of tumult, which would hardly fail to bring down upon them the Roman garrison (always present during the Passover), who would probably, after their manner, smite right and left, and defile the sacred courts with blood, without regard to the cause or circumstances. If, then, He were apprehended publicly, it could not be till after the festival, when the crowds from distant quarters had taken their departure. But Jesus himself might then depart also, as He had done formerly. It was therefore desirable to obtain possession of his person privately, by some craft or contrivance. They knew that He left the city every evening, sometimes for Bethany, sometimes for places in the immediate neighbourhood. There was small hope, therefore, of surprising Him at night, unless under the guidance of one who knew where to find Him, and was able to distinguish Him in the night from the followers who were always with Him. Among these followers, so devoted to Him, it was little likely that such a traitor should be found. But while they were debating the matter, the very man they wanted appeared, and made a voluntary offer of his services to betray his Master to them. His question was blunt and characteristic, agreeing with the worst interpretations of his conduct and motives : ‘ *What will ye give*

me, and I will deliver Him unto you?' They at length agreed for thirty pieces of silver—the very sum which had, centuries before, been indicated by a prophet. Zech. xi. 12. It has been urged, that the smallness of the reward shows, that Judas was not wholly actuated by avaricious motives. But it is to be remembered, that although the crime was great, the service was small in itself, and might have been rendered by some spy hired by them, though not so well as by him. The bribe is also not so small as it seems to us. If shekels, as seems to have been the case, it was equal to about 75s., or half the value of the ointment, the 'waste' of which had stirred him so deeply. It was also equal to five months' wages of a husbandman, and taking such wages for a standard of relative value (the wages of our husbandmen being about thrice as much), this sum would in actual value be equal to little less than £10 with us.

This being settled, Judas lay watchful for any opportunity that might offer of betraying his Master in the absence of the multitude.

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The following remarks, taken from Dr. Hanna's thoughtful lectures on *The Last Days of Our Lord's Passion*, appear to me not only to depict the principal feature in the character of Judas, but to set forth, in a striking form, a great general truth: 'We often wonder, as we read his story, how it was ever possible that, in the face of so many, so explicit, so solemn, so affectionate appeals, this man should have so obstinately pursued his course. We should wonder, perhaps, the less, if we only reflected what a blinding, hardening power any one fixed idea, any one settled purpose, any one dominant passion, in the full flush and fervour of its ascendancy, exerts upon the human spirit; how it blinds to consequences that are then staring us in the very face; how it deadens to remonstrances to which, in other circumstances, we should at once have yielded; how it carries us over obstacles that at other times would at once have stopped us,—nay more, and what, perhaps, is the most striking feature of the whole, how the very interferences, for which otherwise we should have been grateful, are resented; how the very appeals, intended and fitted to arrest, become as so many goads, driving us on the more determinedly upon our path. So it was with Judas. And let us not

think that we have in him a monstrous specimen of almost super-human wickedness. We should be nearer the truth, I fancy, if we took him as an average specimen of what the passion of avarice, or any like passion, when once it has got the lordship, may lead any man to be and do.'

### *Thirty-ninth Week—Third Day.*

#### THE SUPPER AND THE AGONY.

MATT. XXVI. 17-46; MARK XIV. 12-42; LUKE XXII. 7-46;  
JOHN XIII.-XVIII. 1.

THE day of Thursday was spent by our Lord at Bethany; but the apostles were sent to Jerusalem to engage an apartment where the Passover might be eaten in the evening, and to prepare a lamb for the occasion.

When the evening was come, Jesus also repaired to Jerusalem; and, having joined the apostles, sat down with them to the sacred meal which had been prepared, and which He designed to render more sacred and more memorable.

When they were seated, but before the commencement of the repast, Jesus perceived that the apostles, with their still inveterate infatuation, were discussing among themselves which of them should be the greatest in his approaching kingdom. Upon this, He arose from table, and laying aside his upper garment, as servants used to do when rendering the same service to their masters, He took a basin of water and a towel, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet; designing thus to impress upon their minds, in a manner not to be obliterated, a lesson and an example of that lowliness of mind which had distinguished his own career, and ought to characterize theirs. They did not at first apprehend his object, and were doubtless much distressed that their revered Master should thus demean himself; but yielding in childlike submission to his will, they offered no resistance. None did but Peter; who, when his turn came, gave way to his excitable temper, and absolutely refused that his Master should render this servile office to him.

Jesus told him that this act had a meaning which he would understand afterwards. Why not tell him at once? Because, as Chrysostom suggests, had Christ told Peter as a reason for that act, that He wished to teach him humility, the fiery disciple would not have been satisfied with it, but would have answered, 'I can learn humility without having my feet washed.' As it was, he was not able to humble the natural feelings in a childlike manner under that expression of his Lord's will. Jesus, therefore, as a Master who knew well how to rule his own house, said to him, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Whereupon the always ardent apostle flies at once to the opposite extreme, and knows no limit to his obedience: 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus told him this was not needful; and then proceeded to impress upon them, that if He, whom they rightly looked up to as their Lord and Master, had thus performed the part of a servant toward them, they ought to be servants in love to each other, without cherishing, as they had done, grievous worldly aspirings after distinctions, and superiorities over one another.

The supper then commenced, and was celebrated in the usual manner, which we need not explain; but it was marked towards the close by an incident which requires our attention. It is clear that the mournful condition of his lost disciple hovered continually before the mind of the Redeemer. So, after washing the disciples' feet, He said, 'Ye are clean, but not all.' Further on, when He was giving high promises to his disciples, He intimated his knowledge that there was one to whom such promises gave no pleasure. Nevertheless, He knew those whom He had chosen to be his apostles. He had not selected this one to be of their number through any error or oversight, but because it was so determined in the divine counsels; and He quoted Psalm xli. 9: 'He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me;' at which the heart of the traitor must have quaked, if he were not yet wholly hardened. But he was quite hardened now. It is not a feeling of aroused indignation which the heavenly and compassionate Saviour manifests towards the traitor; it is that of an

affectionate sorrow, which constantly renews the attempts to make a saving impression upon a depraved heart. It might have been expected that as soon as Judas perceived his sin was known to his Master, he would have cast himself at his feet, confessing all, and imploring his forgiveness. But he was too far gone in his evil purposes to think of that now. Perceiving this, and finding that even the last great proof of humble love—the washing of his feet—had made no impression upon him, his presence became oppressive to our Lord in that solemn hour, and He wished him to withdraw from the circle of those who loved and were beloved by Him. He now, therefore, in the most distinct manner, gave utterance to the thought that there was one in that holy and beloved circle who would prove a traitor to Him. But the moment was so solemn, and their reverence for their Lord so great, that they dared not ask Him to name the man. Presently, however, a strong desire urged the impulsive Peter to make the inquiry. Yet he did not like to do so aloud, and was probably led to put the question in an under-tone. He signalled John, whose place at table was next below Jesus, and who thus reclined in such a manner that his head lay toward the breast of his Master. John whispered, 'Lord, who is it?' And the answer, probably in the same under-tone, was, 'He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it.' Here we must understand that, after the second cup of wine at the paschal feast, the father of the family took a piece of unleavened bread, and broke it into pieces, of which he gave one to each of those present, commonly dipping it first in the broth. While replying to John, our Lord took one of these morsels, and, dipping it in the dish, gave it to Judas. It is doubtful whether any of the apostles, except John, and perhaps Peter, understood this indication, for the act itself was proper to the occasion, and the words were, probably, audible only to John, to whom they were addressed. But Judas had, doubtless, observed and construed these successive movements, and deeming himself marked out to the other apostles, his heart became filled with wrath; and fancying that now at last he had some justification for his conduct,

he cast all remorseful thoughts to the winds, and became fixed in his fell and traitorous purpose. Observing that this was the man's state of mind, Jesus could no longer endure his presence. He wished to declare to his beloved ones the anguish He felt at parting with them, to comfort them in that sad prospect, and to declare to them the great blessings which his death would work out for the race of man. This He could not do in the presence of one whose contemplated act was to be the proximate cause of all this anguish, and whose heart was alien from his and theirs. He therefore told him to depart, saying, 'That thou doest, do quickly;' words which the traitor and John and Peter could construe aright, but from which the other apostles, still in their simple-mindedness, concluded only that he had been sent to make some further preparations for the festival, or to take some alms to the poor. Even Peter and John may not have supposed that the treasons of Judas were so near at hand.

When he was gone, Jesus began to speak of his own departure; and it appears that the apostles still thought that it could at worst be only a temporary removal of some kind, from which He would return in glory. Or perhaps they may have supposed no more than that, to escape from treachery, He meant to withdraw for a time to some distant part of the country. Of his removal by *death* they could not realize the idea. When, therefore, He said, 'Whither I go ye cannot come,' Peter asked with amazement, 'Whither goest Thou?' And when Jesus answered that He went whither he could not follow Him *then*, though he should thereafter, Peter, gathering from this only that some danger attended his removal, which He cared not that his friends should share, exclaimed, with his usual impetuosity, 'Why cannot I follow Thee *now*? I will lay down my life for thy sake.' And no doubt he was sincere. But Jesus knew him better far than he was known to himself. He looked through his soul, and saw that these strong expressions sprang more from a swell of generous feeling, than from a will firmly grounded. He therefore warned him to look well to his own heart, and told him that he would that day, that

very night, before the second crowing of the cock, fall deeply, but only to rise again, stronger, wiser, better, and fitter for all work in the service of his Master.

Jesus then proceeded to institute the new festival to be held in remembrance of Him, in which the broken bread was to represent his body, given to death and the grave for them ; and the wine his blood, 'shed for many, for the remission of sins.'

After this our Lord commenced that touching and sublime discourse, which occupies three chapters of St. John's Gospel, the purport of which has been already indicated, and which closes with the prayer for his disciples, and for those who through their labours should believe on his name—that is, for the church in all ages, that they might be 'one in Him.' He knew doubtless that they would not be so entirely one in each other's view as He desired ; He therefore made it the essential point that they should be one *in Him* ; and such, it is a happiness to think, the greater part of them substantially are, notwithstanding their too frequently foreign aspect to each other.

Late at night our Lord left the city with the disciples, but proceeded no farther than to the Mount of Olives, near the base of which there was an olive farm called Gethsemane, belonging probably to a disciple of Jesus, and to which our Lord was in the habit of repairing when He did not mean to go to Bethany. Scarcely had He arrived here, when He withdrew into the deepest solitudes of the plantation. Most of the disciples seem to have remained at the house with the friendly host, and only three of them, Peter, James, and John, the same who were present at the transfiguration, went with Him, and, somewhat apart, became witnesses to the mighty struggle of his soul. For it was here He endured, shaded by the overhanging olives from the pale light of the moon, that great agony which, in the chilly night, wrung from his brow the perspiration, falling like 'great drops of blood' to the ground—meaning, probably, not that the perspiration was blood, or was mixed with blood, but that it gathered and fell in great clammy drops like those of blood. In repeated prayer to the Father, He asked that 'this cup' might pass from Him ; yet He always

added, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' At length an angel from heaven appeared to comfort Him, and from that heavenly sustainment He arose firm and calm to meet his doom.

We may reverently ask, What was it that moved Him so deeply? What cup was that which He desired might pass from Him? Is it possible that, as the time drew near, He shrank from that suffering and death, which He had always contemplated as the inevitable close of his career?—that in this dread hour He faltered in the great task which He had undertaken of delivering man? This will seem to many impossible, especially when they reflect that many martyrs and great men have, under the faith and solace of a good cause, yielded up their bodies to torture and to death without dismay, saying,

'Resting in the glorious hope  
To be at last restored,  
Yield we now our bodies up  
To earthquake, fire, and sword.'

But we must remember that the case was very different with Him from what it was with them. They had only to die; but there was much more for Him to do. We have seen that He was capable of being 'tempted like as we are,' and we need not repeat the considerations advanced in connection with his temptation in the wilderness. But it was then shown that the agony which our Lord now endured in the garden was another temptation, in which Satan, knowing it was the last time, put forth all his strength, and tried Him most severely. 'The cup' must have been the suffering that lay before Him. It is hard to see what else it could have been; and the supplication to be excused from drinking it, shows that the temptation lay in this, that the suggestion now was not, as formerly, that He should exalt himself to earthly honour, but simply that He should waive the duty He had undertaken. The 'agony'—which word means wrestling, striving, struggle—lay not so much, we apprehend, in the dread of what was now before Him, as in the strong-handed conflict against the suggestion; and the utmost to which He could for a moment be brought, was to pray that if there could possibly be found any other means of



deliverance for man, He might be released from his obligation ; but if not, God's will be done. And the Father did manifest his will by the angel, who came, not to relieve Him from that cup, but to give Him strength to drink it, even to the dregs.

One who has written well on this subject says : ' I have no hesitation in believing that He was here put upon the trial of his obedience. It was the purpose of God to submit the obedience of Jesus to a severe ordeal, in order that, like gold tried in the furnace, it might be an act of perfect and illustrious virtue ; and for this end He permitted Him to be assailed by the fiercest temptations to disobey his will and refuse the appointed cup. In pursuance of this purpose the mind of Jesus was left to pass under a dark cloud, his views lost their clearness, the Father's will seemed shrouded in obscurity, the cross appeared in tenfold horror, and nature was left to indulge her feelings and put forth her reluctance.'

The objection which naturally arises to this view, from the unshaken countenance with which righteous men have looked upon death in its most terrible aspects, is well met by the same writer. ' The pious and holy man has not had a world's salvation laid upon him ; he has not been required to be absolutely perfect before God ; he has known that if he sinned, there was an advocate and a ransom for him. But nothing of this consolation could be presented to the mind of Jesus. He knew that He must die, as He had lived, without sin ; but if the extremity of suffering should so far prevail as to provoke Him into impatience or murmuring, or into a desire for revenge, this would be sin ; and if He sinned, all would be lost, for there was no other Saviour. In such considerations may probably be found the remote source of the agonies and fears which deepened the gloom of that dreadful night.'<sup>1</sup>

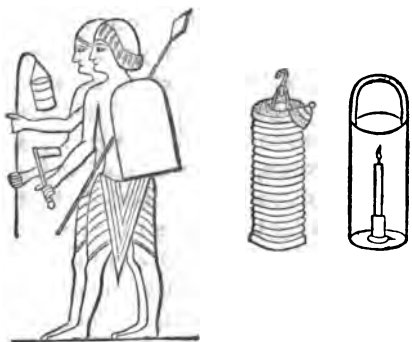
<sup>1</sup> Dr. LEWIS MAYER, in the *American Biblical Repository* for 1841.

**Thirty-ninth Week—Fourth Day.**

THE JEWISH TRIAL.

MATT. XXVI. 47-75 ; MARK XIV. 43-65 ; LUKE XXII. 47-71 ;  
JOHN XVIII. 2-27.

By the time that our Lord arose victorious over his grievous temptation in Gethsemane, his enemies, led on by Judas, appeared in the garden. They came in force, probably apprehensive of resistance from the disciples, or of some attempt at rescue by the way. The priests had brought not only some of the Levites who served in the temple, and who acted as official attendants and apparitors of the Sanhedrim, but also a company of Roman soldiers, obtained probably rather to sustain the others in case of any attempt at resistance or rescue, than to take an active part in the proceedings ; and the force was not simply well armed, but provided with lights—both torches



of pitch, or wax, or resinous wood, and lanterns in which oil was burning. It was indeed the full of the moon ; but the moon may have been overcast, or it was feared that He whom they sought might escape by passing away under the shade of the trees.

On entering, Judas went before them, and going straight up

to his Master, gave Him the kiss usual between friends meeting again after some time of absence. This was the sign which he had appointed for the identification of Jesus, who well understood its purport, yet wishing to recall him to a consciousness of his crime, said, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' and then after a moment's pause, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' If the man had a heart, these words must have smitten it; and there is reason, from what afterwards happened, to think that they did.

Jesus then, anxious to shield his disciples, advanced to the approaching force, and said, 'Whom seek ye?' They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' He said, 'I am He;' at which words, instead of advancing to seize Him, they drew so hastily back, that many of them fell to the ground. What ailed them? The answer is easily found, if we look back to what took place with the officers who were sent by the Sanhedrim to apprehend Him in the temple, and who, overawed by his presence and his words, were unable to fulfil their office. The same officers, being attendants on the Sanhedrim, were doubtless in the foremost body now, and had themselves received, and imparted to their fellows, exalted ideas of his dignity and power. Conscience taught them that they were engaged in an evil work. And thus, when Jesus—the single object of all this formidable array—stood forth, in the serene and heavenly dignity of One at whose rebuke, as they knew, the traffickers had fled the temple, and whose voice the shrouded and buried dead had heard, they were appalled, and for the moment hesitated. It is indeed quite possible, that but for the presence of the Roman soldiers, who shared not these impressions, they would have returned to the city without their prisoner. Jesus, however, thought not to avail himself of their confusion. He was willing; and they had no power over Him but that which his will gave. He therefore again asked the question; and, on receiving the same answer, desired them, since their orders were only to take himself, to let the disciples depart unmolested. The military, perceiving how backward in the discharge of their office were those to whom the seizure had been mainly entrusted, now thrust them aside.

and themselves laid hold on Jesus, and bound Him, as was the custom with all prisoners at their apprehension, whatever their offence. They then gave Him in charge to the Jewish officers, whose prisoner He was.

On beholding this treatment of their revered Master, the disciples became strongly excited, and one of them drew a sword, with which he smote the most forward of the men, cutting off his right ear. And to whom would any reader ascribe this hasty act? None who has read these pages would hesitate a moment to say that it was Peter; and Peter it was—who seemed now ready, as he had said, to die for his Master. To screen Peter from the consequences of his rashness, and to favour his escape, as well as to show that He went not as a captive of the sword, and that no blood should be lost on his account, he begged a moment's pause, while He healed the man's ear. His name was Malchus, and he was known as a servant of the high priest. Thus, the last act of healing by our Lord was performed in favour of one who had been the most active among his enemies. He was then led away; and, as He had a few hours before predicted, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Two of them, however, turned, and followed at a safe distance to watch the result. One of these was Peter, the other John. They observed that their Lord was taken to the palace of Annas 'the high priest.' The actual high priest at the time was Caiaphas; but this Annas had been high priest, and as such enjoyed the title by courtesy. Being also a man of great wealth and influence, and of active habits, he took upon him much of the business of that high office, as a sort of assessor to, or substitute for, Caiaphas, who was his son-in-law. Hence the evangelist describes them both as 'high priests' (Luke iii. 2), as they were in fact. We do not know, however, why our Lord should have been first taken to the house or Annas, unless that probably he took a prominent part in the judicial business of the office, and that his house may have been nearer than that of Caiaphas. Or it may be that the officers merely took their prisoner to Annas to apprise him that Jesus had been captured, and to ask his further instructions.

He directed that our Lord should be taken to the palace of Caiaphas.

It happened that John was known to the household of the high priest, and of course known as a disciple of Jesus. He found ready admittance to the interior ; and presently, knowing that Peter was lingering about the entrance, he went and spoke ' to her that kept the door,' and obtained leave from her to introduce his friend. It seems strange to find a woman acting as portress to a great mansion. This custom has not been preserved in the East, but anciently it existed among the Jews,<sup>1</sup> and to some extent among the Greeks and Romans. The friends were now in the outer court of the palace, where a number of servants and Levitical officers were waiting, and the night being cold, they had a charcoal fire, around which they gathered to warm themselves. Peter joined them, and warmed himself at the fire, trying to assume the manner of an unconcerned spectator. He could see, if not hear, all that passed in the large open room to which Jesus was brought, and in which the examination took place. What became of John we know not. It is open to inference that he did not remain here ; but, being acquainted with the premises and the people, went up nearer, so as to see and hear more clearly all that passed. It fared ill with Peter at the fire. His late confidence was now exchanged for timid caution ; and with anxiety for his Lord, a strong apprehension of compromising himself was mingled. The woman who had let him in guessed, perhaps from his connection with John, that he was one of the disciples of Jesus, and, as he stood there in the midst of dangerous persons, put the question to him, whether he was not. He denied stoutly that he was ; but perceiving that he was still regarded with distrust, he withdrew from the fire, and went out into the vestibule, leading to the outer door. The cock then crew ; but in the excitement of the moment the warning sound fell blank upon his ear. Presently another woman noticed him, and began to say to those who stood by that ' this was one of them.' Seriously alarmed at what he heard, he again denied the charge. It may excite

<sup>1</sup> See another instance in Acts xii. 13.

surprise that the women should be thus forward in suspecting him. But Jesus had been seen and heard by multitudes in the city, with Peter and the other apostles in attendance upon Him; and as women observe individuals more narrowly than men, his countenance had left an impression upon their minds in connection with that of Jesus. Still, the difference of light sufficed to prevent the recollection from being quite determinate, or more than a strong impression. But Peter now thought it better to mix boldly with the people in the court around the fire, than to excite suspicion by lurking about. He therefore returned thither, and entered into the conversation that was going on. At length one who stood by—perhaps one who had been in the garden and had witnessed his assault upon Malchus, for he is said to have been a relative of that man—said, ‘Surely thou art one of them;’ and in corroboration added, that his accent and mode of speech clearly showed him to be a Galilean. In fact, we know from Jewish authorities, that the rough provincial accent of the Galileans was very distinguishable from that of the metropolis, and was, in fact, a subject with which the Jerusalemites often made themselves merry. Peter, now seriously frightened, denied the charge with great earnestness, confirming the denial with an oath, and declaring that he knew nothing whatever of the man of whom they spoke. The word had scarcely left his mouth when the cock again crew, and at the same moment Jesus ‘turned and looked upon Peter.’ That sad look went instantly to his heart; and, leaving the place, he sought some spot apart, where he might reason freely over his sin, and pour forth the hot tears of shame and grief.

On the arrival of Jesus, the high priest seems to have sent out to call an early meeting of the Sanhedrim at his palace. The members of that body were probably in bed, and to get them together for an extraordinary meeting must have taken some time. Meanwhile the high priest himself subjected the prisoner to a preliminary examination. He asked Him concerning his doctrine. But Jesus said, He had always taught publicly; nothing had been done in secret, and the tenor of

his teaching could easily be ascertained from those who had heard Him. And so, throughout, He refuses to stand upon his defence, or to furnish materials which might be perversely used to convict Him, by those who had predetermined on his destruction. One of the officers who stood by chose to consider the answer disrespectful to the high priest, and smote Jesus on the mouth. This practice is still retained in some parts of the East, especially Persia, the blow being usually inflicted with the heel of a shoe, which inflicts a very severe wound, sometimes cutting the lips, and sometimes breaking the teeth, and filling the mouth with blood. In this instance, however, the stroke was not so severe, being inflicted with the palm of the hand.

After this preliminary proceeding, Caiaphas seems to have withdrawn to his private apartments till the meeting of the council, which did not take place till the morning broke.

Though the council had predetermined on the death of Jesus, they, out of regard to their character, and the customs of the court, which could not easily be dispensed with, felt the necessity of observing some show of legal procedure. The fundamental rule of evidence was, that no man could be capitally convicted but on the evidence of two independent witnesses for every essential fact. Now, although there were plenty of witnesses willing to testify to anything, no two appeared whose testimony could be made to tally in the degree which the law required. The nearest point that could be reached, was when two witnesses were found to agree tolerably in a very distorted and even absurd version of a declaration He had made on his first ministerial visit to Jerusalem. He had said, 'Destroy this temple (meaning the temple of his body), and I will raise it up in three days;' but they declared, 'We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' This was certainly, as the evangelist says, false evidence; and, after all, there was no law which could make this declaration, even as thus misreported, a capital offence. Jesus meanwhile had not condescended to put himself upon his defence: He did not cross-examine the witnesses; He did not

expose their misrepresentations; He did not vindicate his character or statement. He asked nothing; He explained nothing. 'As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth.'

Exasperated by this imperturbable silence, and seeing that there was no proof on which a conviction could be founded, unless it might be drawn from himself, the high priest called his attention to the evidence advanced, and asked why He did not answer to it. No reply was given. On this Caiaphas became desperate, and adopted a resource which our own rules of evidence would declare to be most infamous, which was also wholly adverse to the first principles of Mosaic jurisprudence, and the like of which occurs in no case recorded in Hebrew history. It was that of putting the prisoner upon his oath to answer questions framed for his own crimination. It is noticeable that the continental commentators seem to observe nothing reprehensible in this, as their own legal practice allows every advantage to be used, for the purpose of extorting confessions or fatal admissions from a criminal. The high priest could not, indeed, force Jesus to take an oath, but he could lay Him under an equivalent constraint, which would compel any man to speak, and a religious man to speak truly. He said, 'I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.' Thus adjured, Jesus could not but speak; and, indeed, the satisfaction of his followers required that He should take the opportunity of declaring himself plainly on this point, before the highest ecclesiastical tribunal of his country. He therefore answered decidedly in the affirmative.

Even this was not sufficient for their purpose; for, before they could convict Him, it required evidence to show that He was *not* what He thus claimed to be; and certainly his mighty works, which were abundantly attested, went all the other way. But He further expressed himself so as to lead them to see that He claimed even a higher rank than they ascribed to the Messiah; on hearing which, there was a general exclamation, 'Art thou, then, the Son of God?' And on his answer that He



was, the high priest, though joyful at having obtained what he considered conclusive proof, rent his clothes as an expression of grief and consternation, and declared that no further witness-bearing could be needful, after this shocking blasphemy from the prisoner's own mouth. The rest were of the same opinion, and declared Him worthy of death.

He was then abandoned to the low and ribald treatment of the brutal fellows in the court below. Some spat in his face—the last and most degrading of insults to an Oriental; while others, in derision of his prophetic powers, covered his eyes, and then striking Him, asked Him to tell who it was that smote Him.

### *Thirty-ninth Week—Fifth Day.*

#### THE ROMAN TRIAL.

MATT. XXVII. 1-31; MARK XV. 1-20; LUKE XXIII. 1-25;  
JOHN XVIII. 28-KIX. 16.

THE Sanhedrim had pronounced sentence of death against Jesus; but the power of life and death having been taken from them, the sentence they had given could not be executed without the sanction of the Roman governor. Here they were in a difficulty. The offence was a religious one—that of blasphemy. If the governor took the trouble to inquire into it, there would be a difficulty in making a heathen understand it, and he might be reluctant to sanction the capital punishment of an offence that would seem to him trivial. On the other hand, if, with polite readiness, he gave his formal sanction to the sentence passed on a criminal they had tried, he would give Him back to them for punishment. In that case He would be stoned; but this was not desirable to them, as it might be doubted whether the populace were so far set against Him, that their enthusiasm might not easily be rekindled in his favour, in which case the feeble force at their disposal would be quite inadequate to ensure the execution of the sentence, and

their victim might yet escape from their hands. It was, therefore, in their view highly desirable that the case should be so presented to the view of the governor, as to ensure his earnest attention to it, and throw upon the Romans the odium of the deed, and its actual execution.

The Roman government in Judea was very jealous in the prosecution to death of all offences against the public peace and the power of Rome ; and hence those who led or took part in popular commotions, or who advanced pretensions or doctrines adverse to its predominance, or who in any way opposed themselves to its authority, were most rigorously handled—especially by Pilate, the existing governor, who had very lately shown great severity in inflicting the punishment of death upon persons whose offences had been of this nature.

The Sanhedrim, therefore, most dishonestly resolved to shift their ground, and to present to Pilate, as a political offender, dangerous to Rome (whose power at the same time they themselves most bitterly detested), Him whom they themselves had convicted of a religious offence.

It was now morning, and the Sanhedrim, while they adjourned to their own proper court in the temple, sent a deputation of their body to bring the case before Pilate, to whom also the prisoner was at the same time sent in bonds.

The usual abode of the Roman governor was at Cæsarea Palestina ; but he usually came over to Jerusalem at the Passover, with a large body of soldiers to keep the multitude in awe during the festival season. In Jerusalem, his state residence was the palace built by the elder Herod ; but he was sometimes in the Tower of Antonia, the strong fortress commanding the temple. It is not certain to which of these places our Lord was taken, but most probably to the former.

Arrived here, the Sanhedrists found another difficulty. They could not enter the house of the heathen governor, lest they should be defiled, and thereby rendered unfit for the further celebration of the Passover. There was, however, an elevated tessellated pavement in front of the palace, where the governor often set his judgment-seat when such cases occurred. Hither

Pilate came out, when he understood that he was wanted ; the prisoner being, meanwhile (for better custody, perhaps), taken into the fore court of the palace itself, among the soldiers.

It cannot be doubted that Pilate had already heard some things concerning Jesus, and had formed some views respecting Him, deeming Him a harmless enthusiast of pure character and aims, very different from the demagogues of that age, and one from whom no danger was to be apprehended. He also knew enough of the Jewish rulers to believe that, whatever their pretence, they must be acting against Him in this case from some selfish motive. That Jesus had been made prisoner, he must also have known, from having permitted them to take a number of the soldiers to aid in his apprehension. Upon the whole, therefore, when he took his place on the judgment-seat, he was at least impartial, with favourable leanings, if any, rather to the prisoner than to the accusers. They seemed at first to expect that he would sanction their proceedings without inquiry, and were therefore annoyed that he evinced a disposition to go thoroughly into the case. When, accordingly, he asked the nature of their accusation, they answered sharply, that he ought to conclude they would not bring any one to that court who was not a grievous offender. To this he answered, with some sternness, that (assuming it to be some trivial offence) they might take and judge the accused according to their own law, without troubling him with the case. They answered that they had no power to put any one *to death*. By this he saw the extent to which they desired to go, and reluctantly composed himself to hear their accusation.

Whether Pilate laughed we cannot tell ; but we can tell that he had exceeding good reason to do so, when these bearded fathers of the Sanhedrim began with a grave face to declare that, out of zeal for the Roman government, they had brought before his tribunal ‘ this fellow,’<sup>1</sup> whom they had found perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a king. Now, however ridiculous this

<sup>1</sup> ‘Fellow,’ as some have remarked, is not expressed in the original. But it is rightly inserted, being understood in what *is* expressed.

charge seems to us, it was skilfully framed to compel Pilate to take up the matter seriously. The refusal to pay tribute was, as we have seen, a very critical and very popular question; and although he might deride the other charge, it was very certain that it would fare hardly with him, if it should once reach the ears of the Emperor Tiberius, as it was likely to do, that he had refused to investigate a charge of this nature, the mere accusation of which was all but fatal in that reign. Convinced, however, that it could have no really solid foundation, he went into the interior judgment-hall, and calling Jesus thither, plainly asked Him the question, 'Art thou the king of the Jews?' Our Lord's answer, in which He asks whether Pilate made this inquiry of himself or from the suggestion of others, teaches us that He wished him to declare, whether his question referred to an external political sovereignty, or to the Jewish notions of a theocratic king—the Messiah. Pilate replied with some heat, but plainly enough, that he was not a Jew, and could not enter into Jewish questions; and having thus avowed that he looked merely to the political side of the question, our Lord admitted that He had a kingdom, but declared that it was one not of this world. Pilate seems to have caught a glimpse of his meaning; but with the instinctive abhorrence of the worldly-minded, he shrank from any inquiries about what was not of this world, and pressed the particular point which was judicially before him. 'Art thou a king, then?' Jesus could not deny that He was; but still expressed with sufficient clearness that He claimed no earthly dominion. What it was, He intimated in the words, 'For this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice'—every one, that is to say, who became subject to that realm of truth in which He was King. There was here a sort of appeal to the conscience of Pilate; but there was no response from within. The procurator, a type of the educated Roman world, especially of its higher classes, lost in worldly-mindedness, and unconscious of deeper wants than those of this life, had not the moral sense requisite for the appreciation of truth. 'What is

truth?’ was his mocking question. ‘Truth is but an empty name,’ he meant to say.<sup>1</sup>

He then went out, confirmed in his first impression that Jesus was simply a well-meaning religious enthusiast, innocent of any political offence ; and, accordingly, he declared to his accusers that he could ‘find no fault in him at all.’ A ferocious growl was the response ; and they told him that this man had set the whole country in an uproar, from Judea even unto Galilee. As they expected, Pilate caught at the name of Galilee, which had lately supplied more than one dangerous demagogue, and having ascertained that He belonged to the territory of Herod, he determined to get rid of this troublesome affair, by sending the accused to the tetrarch, whose immediate subject He was, and whom he might suppose better qualified than himself to judge in this case ; nor did it escape him that he would be thus enabled to show a gratifying mark of attention to Herod, with whom he had lately been on ill terms. Jesus was accordingly sent to Herod, who had come to Jerusalem at the Passover. We know that the tetrarch had long desired to see Him, in the hope of witnessing the performance of some wonder by one so renowned for his miracles. But it was no part of our Lord’s calling to gratify an idle curiosity ; nor could any object be gained by declaring his doctrine to one so utterly worldly. He therefore performed no miracle, and was silent to all the questions put to Him. Herod was acute enough to see, however, that Jesus was not really open to any capital charge ; and after the odium he had incurred on account of John the Baptist, he was not willing to add the death of Jesus to the number of his crimes. Yet, being exasperated at the dignified passiveness of Jesus, he caused Him to be arrayed in a gorgeous purple robe (doubtless one of his own) in derision of his royal Messianic dignity, and having abandoned Him to the brutal mockeries of his soldiers, sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate was distressed to find the case turned again upon his hands ; and his perplexity was increased by having meanwhile received a message from his wife, begging him to have nothing

<sup>1</sup> NEANDER.

to do with 'that just person,' for she had in the night suffered much in a dream concerning Him. At length a way of escape was presented to his troubled thoughts. It was usual, out of compliment to the Jews and their Passover, for the Roman governor to grant a free pardon to any one prisoner whom the people might name. Pilate hoped that this custom might be made available to deliver Jesus; for whatever might be the views of the Sanhedrim, he could not doubt that when the question came to be referred to the people, they would decide for Jesus, who had stood so high in their favour—the rather, as the choice seemed to lie between Him and a most notorious malefactor named Barabbas. But when the question was put to them, the people, worked upon by their own disappointed expectations, and by the urgency of the Sanhedrists, clamorously gave their voices for a robber and murderer, rather than for One who had so often healed their diseases, to whose words of warning, hope, and peace they had so often listened, and before whom their triumphant hosannas had been so lately shouted.

This decision was final as to Barabbas; but then Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus. The hoarse answer was, 'Crucify him! crucify him!' Yet again the governor remonstrated, that neither he nor Herod had been able to discover any cause of death in Him; and hoping to pacify them, he said he would chastise Him, and then release Him. But nothing less than his life would now satisfy them, and the cry of 'Crucify him' became more loud and fierce. Still Pilate did not despair; but abandoned Him for the time to the cruel mercy of the soldiers, and they being, perhaps, incited by bribes from the Jewish leaders, treated Him with great harshness. The lictors performed their usual duty of scourging the condemned; but besides this, the men, taking the hint from the purple robe with which Herod had invested Him, proceeded to place on his head a crown of thorns,<sup>1</sup> and put a reed in his hand for a

<sup>1</sup> There is a plant common in the East, which bears the name of Christ's Thorn (*Zizyphus Spina Christi*), being supposed to have supplied the materials for our Lord's thorny crown. It is very fit for the purpose, the branches being soft, round, and pliant, and armed with small sharp spines.

sceptre. They then kneeled in mockery to Him, crying, ‘ Hail, king of the Jews!’ and then they spat upon Him, and, snatching the reed from his hand, smote with it the thorny crown, driving the spikes into his brow. It has been the custom of late to treat this punishment of scourging lightly. But it was, in fact, frightfully severe. The scourging was far more harsh than that in use among the Jews—which also inflicted no dis-



grace, while that of the Romans was only inflicted upon slaves and foreigners. The scourge was formed of thongs twisted together, and in order to increase the severity of the lash, small pieces of bone were sometimes woven into it. The strokes were thus so severe as to tear and lacerate the flesh.

The influence which our Lord had evidently by this time acquired over the mind of Pilate—accustomed as he was to witness scenes of blood, and to inflict human suffering—was naturally strengthened by every effort he made to save Him. The punishment now inflicted was probably with the hope that this measure of satisfaction to their wild hatred would pacify the Jews, and enable him to drop further proceedings. The

patient dignity which Jesus manifested under this treatment increased the interest of the procurator in his favour, and he caused Him to be brought forth, declaring his conviction of his innocence. But when the host of priests again beheld the object of their fear and hatred, their mad anger immediately broke forth anew into loud cries for his death. Pilate was now in his turn angry, and declared that he at least would have no part in a deed so unrighteous, and they might do as they pleased on their own responsibility. This did not suit them; and finding that the political charge, to which they had given prominence for the express purpose of bringing the matter to a speedy issue, had not made the impression they expected, they returned to their religious accusation, declaring that He deserved death as a blasphemer, who made himself the Son of God. This new accusation perplexed and terrified still more the already strongly-impressed Pilate. Noticing his whole demeanour, his deep and solemn words, and the recent dream of his wife, he was filled with an awful misgiving, and proceeded to question Jesus respecting his origin. But he obtained no answer, Jesus being, as some suggest, unwilling to lead into a greater moral struggle one who, as He saw, would not be able to fight through the battle. This silence, however, annoyed the Roman, who endeavoured to elicit an answer from our Lord by reminding Him of his power over Him. To that, Jesus, perceiving Pilate's inward anguish in his judgment concerning Him, replied by affirming his dependence upon a higher Power, and by declaring that the guilt involved in the issue of this transaction would lie far more heavily at the door of the Jewish accusers than at that of the Roman judge. There was here not only an entire absence of hostility, but something of regard, some sympathy for the mental struggle which the Roman was manifestly undergoing. This Pilate felt; and, strangely impressed by the superiority this wonderful personage had acquired over him, he strove with greater earnestness to release Him. The Jews were still full of nothing but blind fury; and perceiving that their last charge had failed, they returned to the old one with fresh vigour. They cried, 'If thou let this man go,



thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.' This was terrible to such a man as Pilate, involving as it did a charge against himself, which, if it ever reached Rome, could hardly fail to be his ruin. Before this, his resolution gave way; and all his remaining care was to make the deed as much theirs as possible. Once more he ascended the judgment-seat, and caused Jesus to be again brought forth from the palace. 'Behold your king!' he cried, as Jesus appeared. Again the cry to crucify Him arose. 'Shall I crucify your king?' asked Pilate, with bitter sarcasm, of those who were driving him to act against his conscience. They answered, with a profession of attachment to the Roman government, the gross hypocrisy of which must, under all the circumstances, have been loathsome to him, 'We have no king but Cæsar.'

At last the fear of man prevailed over the reproofs of conscience; and vainly did Pilate seek to render satisfaction to the latter, by publicly washing his hands, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.' With a horrid gladness, they accepted the responsibility he strove to shake off, crying, 'His blood be upon us and on our children.' And their acceptance of the burden of that blood was more effectual than his rejection of it; for heavily did it lie on them, and heavily has it lain upon their children unto this day. But the day is coming when they will look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as for an only son.

### *Thirty-ninth Week—Sixth Day.*

#### THE CRUCIFIXION.

MATT. XXVII. 32-66; MARK XV. 21-47; LUKE XXIII. 26-56;  
JOHN XIX. 16-42.

OUR Lord himself had always prophesied, under different forms of expression, that by his countrymen He would be given up to the heathen, and that by their hands He would be crucified, or

‘lifted up;’ that is, lifted up on the cross. This was a Roman, not a Jewish punishment, and therefore showed his prescience that his death, although brought about by the Jews, would be inflicted by the Romans, who employed this form of capital punishment in all their wide dominions, except for those who had the privilege of Roman citizenship. In their case, the mode of punishment was decapitation. Crucifixion was essentially the most ignominious form of death, as hanging is with us.

The execution of our Lord was conducted according to the ordinary forms of crucifixion, except in some particulars, which were modified to meet certain peculiar objections of the Jews.

We may now proceed to trace the circumstances of this punishment; an inquiry which is the more interesting, as death by crucifixion had been abolished many centuries before it began to be represented by the painters, from whom the general ideas of it are derived, and who, having no materials of actual observation, made some considerable mistakes in important points. These mistakes we are now enabled to correct, by the aid of writers who lived while the cross as an instrument of death was still in use.

The place of execution was always outside the walls of towns. At Jerusalem it was upon a swell of ground called Golgotha—the place of a skull—some say on account of the skulls of dead criminals that lay about there, forgetting that the Jews never suffered either the bodies or bones even of criminals to remain unburied. The name was therefore doubtless derived from the skull-like shape of the hill; for we are not bound to credit the tradition, that it was thus named because the skull of Adam had been found there.

Among both Jews and Romans, executions took place immediately after conviction. It was usual first to scourge those who were to be crucified; but Jesus had been already scourged, and was therefore at once led away to execution. Among the Romans as among the Jews, and as now in France, soldiers were much employed in the apprehension and punishment of criminals. It was to soldiers, therefore, under the

command of a centurion, that the crucifixion of our Lord, and of two robbers to be executed with Him, was committed. The German legion is known to have been at that time stationed in Palestine, and probably to soldiers of this legion the execution was entrusted.

Jesus, after being given over to execution, had been divested of his robes of mockery, and his own simple raiment restored to Him. He was then led to Golgotha. The condemned always walked, and the distance was in this case inconsiderable. They had not only to walk, but to carry the cross on which they were to be crucified. This indeed was a part, and a grievous part, of the punishment; and it served to show to the people the nature of the procession, and to indicate the person of the criminal. That this was possible and usual, shows that either the scourging previous to crucifixion was less severe than is generally supposed, or that the cross was not so large and ponderous as is commonly represented. The latter was certainly the case, the cross being simply strong enough to sustain the weight of a human body, and high enough to raise the feet a little above the ground. It is true that our Lord could not long carry the cross; but others bore it the whole way, and it was usual to do so. This fact, however, proves that it was heavy enough to be a load for a man, and actually the cross to be used in the execution, and not merely a light representation of it, as is sometimes imagined. Our Lord, exhausted by his previous sufferings of body and mind, fainted under the burden; and it being clear that He could carry it no farther, the soldiers laid hold of a man coming in from the country, and compelled him to bear it after Jesus. This person was Simon the Cyrenian—that is, of Cyrene in Africa; either as having originally come from that city, but now settled in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood, or as having just arrived from Cyrene to attend the Passover. We suppose that the latter is the case, for there seems no reason why he should have been selected, but that his being seen to be a stranger marked him out for a task too degrading to be forced upon a native Jew. There were probably disciples in the crowd, who would have been glad to

volunteer the performance of this office for their revered Master, but were deterred by the fear of bringing suspicion upon themselves. Some think that Simon was a disciple of Christ, and that he was singled out on account of the special marks of interest and sympathy he manifested. One would suppose, however, that a disciple of Jesus would hardly have been away that morning, and coming in just then. But the notice by Mark, that he was the 'father of Alexander and Rufus,' persons evidently well known to the early church, suggests that he and his did afterwards become eminent disciples; and that as now literally, so afterwards spiritually, he took up his cross and followed Him—finding thus a glorious reward for his labour.

A great crowd, as might be expected, followed the sad procession—many of them the same persons who, a few days before, had made themselves hoarse in shouting hosannas, as Jesus entered in Messianic triumph the gate of the city opposite to that which He was now leaving as a prisoner condemned to die. What was the general feeling among those who witnessed that dismal sight we know not; but we know that the women, of whom there were many, bewailed and lamented Him without restraint. This attracted our Lord's attention; and He turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children;' and then went on to warn them shortly of the evils of the coming time.

The cross consisted of a strong upright post, sharpened at the lower end, by which it was planted in the ground, having a short bar or stake projecting from its middle, and a larger transverse beam firmly joined near its top. In short, it was much as usually represented, excepting that it was not generally so high, and that in all representations the middle bar is omitted. This latter is a serious difference, as much of the weight of the crucified person rested on this bar, on which he in some sort *sat*; whereas, without this, the whole weight of the body would have been suspended from the spikes driven through the hands and feet. This seat, if we may so call it,

rendered the death less torturing, but more lingering, and helps to account for the length of time the crucified, under ordinary conditions, remained alive upon the cross.

Arrived at the place of execution, the condemned man was divested of his clothing, and was usually presented with a cup of wine, sometimes medicated, with a view to impart firmness or to alleviate pain. This cup was offered to our Lord; but He refused it, choosing to endure with a clear and perfect consciousness all that was laid upon Him. The condemned was then speedily nailed to the cross, either before or after its erection. In either case he was made to sit upon the middle bar, and his limbs having been extended and bound with cords, were finally secured with large iron spikes driven through their extremities,—the hands to the transverse beam, and the feet to the upright post. The feet were usually nailed separately; but sometimes one long spike was driven through both feet. The pain was of course dreadful; but the wounds were not in themselves dangerous, nor was there much loss of blood, no important artery being severed. It was at this agonizing moment that our Lord prayed, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Thus did He 'make intercession for the transgressors,' as had been foretold of Him; and thus He afforded a grand example of magnanimity to all his followers who might suffer for righteousness' sake.

It was usual for the Romans to put a 'title,' or inscription at the top of the cross, to denote the offence of the crucified person; a custom observed also by the Turks in their analogous punishment of impalement. In the provinces, these inscriptions were in different languages, so that all might be able to understand for what offence the criminal was executed. The title set up on our Lord's cross was in the vernacular 'Hebrew,' or rather Chaldo-Syriac, the language of Judea; in Latin, the language of the Romans; and in Greek, the language generally spoken in the eastern parts of the Roman empire. At first, Pilate may have ordered the inscription to be made out with no particular regard to its import. It was, 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.' But finding, from their complaints,

that it was unpleasant to the priests, whom he detested, he exulted in their annoyance, and refused to alter it to, 'He said, I am the King of the Jews.'

Jesus now hung upon the cross ; and the soldiers proceeded at leisure to divide the poor spoil his garments afforded. They found no difficulty but with the outer garment, which was the most valuable article of his dress, and which, being woven throughout, that is, seamless, could not be divided without destroying its value. For this, therefore, they cast lots, thus fulfilling, with astonishing precision, a prediction concerning Christ, of which they had never heard : 'They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.'<sup>1</sup>

And how were those who beheld it affected by this awful spectacle? Alas for human nature ! all the sympathy which that spectacle was calculated to excite was confined to the Sufferer's mother, whose heart the long-predicted sword had at length pierced ; to one beloved disciple, who alone ventured to be present there ; to a few women from Galilee, who had to the last been faithful and true ; and to one of the robbers who hung in torture by his side. For the rest, all the evil passions which haunt man's nature, seemed roused to make bitter the last hours of the Redeemer. The soldiers mocked Him ; the passers-by reviled Him ; one of the robbers upbraided Him ; and even chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, members of the supreme court of justice, losing every feeling of humanity, and all respect for the dignity of their rank and character, treated Him with extreme cruelty. At length the sun refused any longer to behold such wickedness. It withdrew, and left the scene in darkness, while He who was the Light of the world was about to expire. This darkness lasted three hours, from twelve to three o'clock (the crucifixion having commenced at nine), when the Redeemer rendered up his soul to his Father.

And what, meanwhile, was *his* demeanour? Unmoved by the taunts and insults which were cast upon Him, or by the sufferings He endured, no complaints, or murmurings, or upbraidings were heard from Him. His thought was still all for

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxii. 18.

others, not for himself. And He still, while thus hanging in torture between earth and heaven, found scope for the exercise of his benevolence, bestowing hope and comfort on one of the malefactors ; and, with filial affection, recommending his beloved mother to the care of his beloved disciple.

During part of the time the darkness lasted, our Lord appears to have relapsed into his garden agony. It seems to have been part of the divine plan, that He should again labour under the hiding of the Father's face, and again be oppressed by the consciousness of the weight and burden of that sin in man for which He laid down his life. At length He cried in agony, ' My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ! ' The agony passed, and left Him thirsty and faint. On his intimating this to the soldiers, they soaked a sponge in vinegar, and lifted it upon the top of a reed to his mouth. Presently after, He knew that his work was accomplished ; that He had endured and suffered all ; that nothing more was required from Him as the price of man's redemption ; and that He was, therefore, free to lay aside that flesh in which He had suffered so long. It was then He cried out, ' It is finished ! ' All was finished. Nothing that He had undertaken remained incomplete. Man was saved, and He was free to depart. It was then that He bowed his head, and resigned his spirit into his Father's hands. He died.

He whose birth had been signally celebrated, could not finish his great task and leave the earth unnoticed. The veil of the temple, separating the holy from the most holy place, was rent in twain, signifying that the ritual and restricted dispensation of Moses was brought to an end, and that full light was now to be let in upon the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. Even the earth trembled ; rocks were rent asunder ; and the tombs were burst open and sent forth their dead. The impression made by these circumstances was very deep and solemn. They who had remained thus long through the darkness, now ' smote their breasts and returned.' And the centurion, beholding these miracles, together with the demeanour of our Saviour, and the marked yielding up of his

life so much before the usual time, could not restrain the exclamation, 'Truly, this was the Son of God!'

It was the custom of the Romans to leave the crucified upon the cross till they expired; and, indeed, to leave even the dead body upon it, for an example and a warning. But the Jewish law directed that the bodies of those who were hanged up for exposure should be taken down and buried before sunset,—a provision by which the land of Israel was happily exempted from those shocking spectacles which have been frequent in other lands, and which have only within living memory been banished from our own. Accordingly, in Palestine, the Romans departed from their usual custom, and despatched those upon the cross who remained alive towards the close of day. They almost invariably were alive then, for crucifixion was an exceedingly lingering death, and, unless under peculiar circumstances, it was rare for any one to expire in less than thirty-six hours, and many lived several days. The men who came to examine the bodies before taking them down, found the two robbers alive; and despatched them by breaking their legs with a bar of iron. When they came to Jesus, they were astonished to find Him already dead; but to make sure, as He might possibly be in a swoon, one of them ran a spear into his side. This alone would have been sufficient to kill Him, had He still lived; but the blood and water which flowed forth from the wound, showed that He was already dead.

Jesus was not to be laid in an unhonoured grave. One of his disciples was a person of wealth and dignity, named Joseph, of Arimathea, who was, like Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrim. This person now scrupled not to manifest his attachment to Christ; for he went boldly to Pilate, to request that the body might be given up to him for interment. It is worthy of note, that Pilate also was astonished to learn that Jesus had died so soon; showing that it was altogether an extraordinary circumstance. He readily granted the application. The time being short, Joseph hastily removed the body; and, having wrapped it up with a large quantity of costly spices provided by Nicodemus, deposited it in a new sepulchre of his own, in



a garden but little distant from the place of crucifixion. They then departed, after rolling a great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre.

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The exact date of the last supper and of the crucifixion has been long a subject of controversy. It is alleged that there is a discrepancy between the narrative of John and the narratives of the other evangelists on this point. It may be well briefly to examine the narratives here, with the view of removing difficulties, and reconciling alleged discrepancies. I shall first give the leading facts as related by the Synoptists.

Matthew says : 'On the first of unleavened, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?' Mark and Luke are more definite ; I give the words of the latter : 'Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed.' There can be no doubt that the day referred to was the 14th of the month, on which, according to the Mosaic law, the paschal lamb was to be killed. The disciples, having received instructions, went and 'made ready the Passover' (Luke xxii. 13). It was, therefore, the *Passover*, and not an ordinary feast.

The events which followed, as related by the Synoptists, are these : Jesus gave the cup to his disciples, and told them to divide it among themselves ; then there arose the question which of them should be greatest (Luke xxii. 24) ; then Judas was identified as the traitor (Matt. xxvi. 21-25) ; then the *Lord's supper* was instituted ; then a hymn was sung, and they all went to Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives ; then followed the agony ; and immediately afterwards Judas betrayed Christ, who was taken before the high priest, and kept in his house till the morning. As soon as it was day, on the morning of the 15th, a council assembled, and condemned Jesus. He was then taken before Pilate. At the third hour (9 o'clock A.M.) He was crucified (Mark xv. 25). There was darkness over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, when our Lord died. Luke tells us, 'that day was the *preparation*, and the Sabbath drew on' (xxiii. 54). The Sabbath commenced at sunset ; it was consequently close upon sunset, on the evening of Friday the 15th, when the body was taken down from the cross.

Such are the plain and explicit facts related by the Synoptists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But on comparing the summary of their story with that given by John, serious difficulties meet us. These I shall state, and endeavour to remove.

1. John states that the day on which Christ was judged and crucified was '*the preparation of the Passover,*' which, some affirm, must mean the Jewish day preceding the evening on which the Passover feast was eaten, that is, Thursday the 14th. If so, the narrative of John is at variance with that of the Synoptists. But it is well known that the word *preparation* was the ordinary name of the Jewish Friday; and, consequently, 'the preparation of the Passover' will signify, 'Friday of the paschal week.' On this point, then, there is no discrepancy.

2. John says of the Jews on the morning of the crucifixion, that they would not enter the judgment-hall of Pilate lest they should be defiled, 'but *that they might eat the Passover*' (xviii. 28). This is the most serious difficulty. The phrase, 'eat the Passover,' usually means 'eat the paschal lamb;' but it does not *necessarily* mean this. It was customary on the first day of the feast, the 15th, to kill peace-offerings, and to feast upon them. The scope of the context, when critically analyzed, shows that the phrase, 'eat the Passover,' must apply to these banquets. It could not apply to the paschal lamb, for it was eaten after sunset; and even had the Jews become defiled in the morning by entering the judgment-hall, they would, according to Mosaic law, have become clean again at sunset (Lev. xxii. 5-7); and thus, in any case, could not have been thus prevented from eating the paschal lamb.

3. John states that when Judas, on the night of the paschal supper, abruptly left the room, 'some of them (the disciples) thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said to him, Buy those things that we have need of *against the feast*' (xiii. 29). It is affirmed by some that the paschal feast must here be meant. But the scope of the narrative explains the true meaning. Two of the disciples had already prepared all that was required for the paschal supper. At the time of Judas' departure, they were sitting at the supper. John, therefore, must have meant the whole festival still before them, with its offerings, unleavened bread, and other requisites.

Other minor difficulties and discrepancies have been mentioned, but they are scarcely worth notice; they all disappear before the light of a thoughtful and thorough examination of the narratives.

**Thirty-ninth Week—Seventh Day.**THE RESURRECTION.<sup>1</sup>

MATT. XXVIII. ; MARK XVI. ; LUKE XXIV. ; JOHN XX.—XXI.

THE enemies of Jesus remembered that He had once or twice intimated that, after three days, He would rise again from the dead. They therefore applied to Pilate for a guard to watch the sepulchre, lest, as they alleged, the disciples should steal away their Master's body, and give out that He had risen from the dead. This was more matter of meditation for Pilate. How it affected him we know not; but he allowed them to employ in this service the guard they already had, and authorized them to secure the sepulchre in any way they thought best. The guard was therefore stationed; and, for further security, the stone which closed the sepulchre was sealed, rendering it impossible that the stone could be moved without the fact being detected. It was thus, in the wisdom of God, ordered that the fears of the enemies of Jesus secured that evidence of the reality of the resurrection, which, had it come from friends alone, might be held open to suspicion.

Jesus was deposited in the sepulchre a little before sunset on Friday, and rose very early on Sunday morning, so that He was almost thirty-six hours in the tomb,—being two nights and one intervening day; but, as this involved one whole day and parts of two days, it is rightly described, according to Jewish usage, as *three* days—or, rather, the resurrection was on the *third* day. The actual circumstances of the resurrection are not fully stated by the sacred writers. We only know that

<sup>1</sup> The main object of this evening's Reading is to supply a connected and coherent statement of the circumstances attending and following the Resurrection, as related by the different evangelists. This is a difficult portion of gospel history, needing some such assistance as is here given; in affording which to the readers of this work, we have availed ourselves of an admirable paper by Professor Robinson of New York, printed in the *American Bibliotheca Sacra* for February, 1845.

very early on Sunday morning there was an earthquake, and an angel of the Lord descended, and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre and sat upon it—showing that he did not *then* enter. ‘His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow;’ and at the sight of him the guards were struck with terror, and sunk to the ground like men dead. What took place *in* the sepulchre we know not; but when examined soon after, there were no marks of confusion or haste; on the contrary, everything testified of deliberation and composure. The grave-clothes were folded up and laid apart; the head-napkin was also folded and deposited in another place.

The women who had come from Galilee had never lost sight of their Lord, from the time He was brought forth to be crucified until they noted the tomb in which He was laid. Their names were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome the mother of Zebedee’s sons. Knowing the haste in which the body had been deposited, it was their intention to come early in the morning after the Sabbath, and dispose it in a more orderly manner for its final rest. After the Sabbath had ended, as it did at sunset, they employed the evening in the requisite preparations, including the purchase of spices and perfumes—perhaps not being aware of the abundant provision made by Nicodemus in that respect. It was early dawn on Sunday morning when they set out; and as they went, it occurred to them that they would find an insuperable difficulty in the removal of the great stone that enclosed the sepulchre. But when they came to the spot, they observed with amazement that the stone had been already removed, and that the mouth of the sepulchre stood open. On perceiving this, Mary Magdalene, without further examination, concluded that the Lord’s body had been stolen away; and ran with all haste back to the city, to inform Peter and John, leaving the other two at the sepulchre, into which they entered. They saw at once that the body of Jesus had disappeared; but they perceived also the angel, as a young man clothed in a long white garment, sitting by the right of the spot where the body had lain. They were naturally terrified; but the angel spoke to

them soothingly, and said of the object of their search, 'He is risen ; He is not here : behold the place where they laid Him.' The good angel knew that even this would be a satisfaction to these faithful women. He also gave them a message to the apostles—that Jesus would meet them when they returned to Galilee.

As these two women were hastening back with gladdened hearts, Jesus himself met them, saying, 'All hail !' With gentle words, He quieted their first alarm, and allowed them to approach and embrace his feet, in testimony of their joy and homage. He then reiterated the message the angel had given, and pursued his way.

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene had found Peter and John ; and excited by the report she brought, they both hurried off to the sepulchre. They ran ; and John, outstripping Peter, arrived soonest at the spot, and, stooping down, looked into the tomb, which he found to be indeed empty, but observed the grave-clothes lying in the manner before described. He did not enter ; but when Peter came up, *he*, with his characteristic ardour, at once went in. John also then entered, and took particular notice of the circumstances ; and, reflecting that any person stealing the body would scarcely have divested it of the grave-clothes, or have disposed of them in the orderly manner he witnessed, or indeed have left them behind at all, he began to have some faint notion that Jesus might have risen from the dead. He says himself that he 'believed ;' and it is difficult to understand what but this he could *then* believe, on the evidence before him.

Peter and John returned thoughtful to the city, wondering greatly at what they had witnessed ; but Mary Magdalene, who had followed them back to the garden, remained there alone after they had departed, weeping before the sepulchre. In the midst of her tears, she stooped down, as John had done, and for the first time looked in ; and then, to her amazement, she beheld *two* angels robed in white, sitting, one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain. To their question, why she wept, she answered, because her Lord's

body had been removed, she knew not whither. After this she turned slightly round, and perceived there was a person standing alone behind her, whom, from his being there, she supposed to be the keeper of the garden. He also asked her why she wept, and she gave the same answer she had just given to the angels; except that she supposed He might have been engaged in the removal of the body she desired to recover. He simply uttered in reply, in well known tones, her name, 'Mary!' and the whole truth at once flashed upon her soul. She exclaimed, 'Rabboni!' as much as to say, 'My dearest Master!' and like the other women, fell at his feet, as if to embrace them and render Him her homage. But this He forbade, for some reason not very clear to us, for He had allowed it not long before to Mary and Salome. After this interview, Mary Magdalene hastened back to the city, and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and what He had said to her. She found them in the midst of their sorrow; and when she told them that Jesus was alive, and that she had seen Him, she could not gain belief.

In the afternoon of the same day, two of our Lord's disciples, one of them named Cleopas, were on their way from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from the city. They had heard before they left some reports of what had taken place in the morning—that the tomb had been found open and empty, and that the women had seen 'a vision of angels,' who said that Jesus was alive. They had perhaps not heard the later report, that Jesus had himself appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to the other women; or if they had heard this, they seem to have attached no importance to it, but, like the other disciples, regarded these reports 'as idle tales.' They were very sorrowful, however, for their Lord's death, and perplexed by the disappearance of his body; while they more than all deplored the frustration of their hopes, that He would 'have delivered Israel' from the Romans. As they discoursed in melancholy tones of these things, Jesus himself drew nigh; 'but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.' Some have thought that they were recent converts, and had

not seen much of Jesus ; so that now, when He was in a different dress from what they had seen Him wear, and especially as they supposed Him dead, they did not know Him. But it is clear from the way in which they did eventually recognise Him, that they had known Him well, and the evangelist seems to intimate that they were supernaturally restrained from knowing Him at this time.

He accosted them courteously, and inquired the subject of their earnest and sad discourse. When they acquainted Him with it, He rebuked them for their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken, which clearly showed that what had happened, and not what they had expected, was in accordance with the divine plan for man's redemption. Then beginning with Moses, and going through all the prophets, He explained to them what was written in the Scriptures concerning himself. They felt the power of his words ; and, as they afterwards expressed it, their 'heart burned within them.' Arriving at their destination, they pressed the Stranger to remain there over the night, as it was now late for farther travelling. He consented, and they entered the house together. Their humble supper was soon ready ; and the Stranger, at once assuming his usual office when taking a meal with his disciples, took the bread, blessed it, and gave it to them. In the manner of this act, and in the tone of voice in which the blessing was given, they at once recognised the Lord ; but before they could recover from their surprise, He had withdrawn from their sight. After this, the two disciples could not remain there, but hastened back to Jerusalem to make this great event known to the brethren. They found the apostles, with some other disciples, assembled together, and as they entered, were greeted with the joyful intelligence, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon !' They then rehearsed what had happened to themselves ; but the disciples seemed at first to discredit their report, as they had done the morning reports of the women, evidently regarding the testimony of Peter as of far more importance. Of this interview of our Lord with Peter, no particulars are given, though it is

mentioned by Paul, who, in speaking of those by whom our Lord had been seen after his resurrection, names the appearance to Peter first, and says nothing of the appearances to the women and to these two disciples. 1 Cor. xv. 5.

The disciples were at their evening meal, and the two from Emmaus were still engaged in their relation, when Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them, and gave the usual salutation, 'Peace be unto you.' As the disciples had discredited most of the previous reports, so now they distrusted the evidence of their own sight, and supposed, in their alarm, that what they saw was a ghost. Jesus hastened to dispel their illusion. To convince them that it was himself, He invited them to touch Him, and showed them the wounds in his hands and his feet. For their further conviction, He asked for food; and when they presented Him with some broiled fish and honey-comb, He ate it before them. He then apprised them that their office in the service of his kingdom, so far from having ended, had now only really begun; and as a foretaste and earnest of the rich qualifying graces of the Spirit which awaited them, He breathed upon them, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.'

One of the apostles was absent on this occasion; and when, on his return, the others related what had occurred, he disbelieved them, as they had before discredited the women. This was Thomas, whose expression of doubt, though reprehensibly strong, is in keeping with the peculiar character we have already seen him indicate: 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, *I will not* believe.' That day week, when they were again assembled, probably in the same place, Thomas was present. Jesus then again appeared among them, much in the same manner as before; and instantly expressed his consciousness of what had passed, by calling Thomas forward to put his finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into his wounded side. It is not likely that he did so; but rather that, oppressed and filled with a sense of the divinity which beamed forth in this mani-



festation of the risen Saviour, Thomas addressed Him by a title which had not hitherto, so far as we know, been applied to Him by any of his disciples—‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus, however, did not fail to rebuke him for making a visible sign the condition of his belief. Far more blessed and precious is that faith which arises from within, than that which thus waits for a summons from without. There is reason to believe that Thomas never forgot this lesson; but there is not much of his subsequent history known to us.

It appears that, even before his death, our Lord had arranged to meet the disciples in Galilee after his resurrection (Matt. xxvi. 32); and so soon as He had risen, the same intimation was, as we have seen, sent to them through the women who were first of all privileged to look upon their risen Lord. Accordingly, they left Jerusalem soon after the termination of the Passover festival, and returned to their homes in Galilee. Both the time and the place were probably appointed. We hear, indeed, of ‘a certain mountain.’ And while the apostles awaited the specified time, they engaged in their usual occupations—most of them being fishermen. One day, as evening advanced, seven of them (including Peter, Thomas, and the sons of Zebedee) put out upon the lake with their nets in a fishing-boat; but during all the night they caught nothing. At early dawn a Stranger was seen upon the shore, from which they were then not far distant; and He called to them, telling them to cast their nets on the right side of the vessel. This they did, and then were not able—not all the seven of them—to draw in the net, on account of the multitude of fishes which it enclosed. One of them—John—recognised his Master in this miracle; and no sooner did Peter catch the suggestion, ‘It is the Lord,’ than he leaped into the water that he might the sooner reach the shore. When the other disciples landed, they found a fire kindled, with fish broiling thereon, and bread ready there. By the direction of the Stranger, they brought some of the fish they had caught, and these also being dressed, ample materials for a simple meal were provided. Of this they were invited to partake; and Jesus took his usual part as Master

of the little feast, distributing their portions to the disciples. Meanwhile, no explanation had passed on either side; and 'none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord.' It was on this occasion, and after this meal, that our Lord put to Peter the touching and thrice-repeated question, 'Lovest thou me?' and charged him to evince his love by feeding his Lord's lambs and his sheep.

At the appointed time the apostles repaired to 'the mountain' where they were to meet their Lord. Jesus had lived longer and had laboured more in Galilee than in any other part of the country, and there his disciples were most numerous. This interview was perhaps, therefore, more public and solemn than any other, not only with the apostles, but with all the disciples who could be got together; and it is probably to this occasion that St. Paul refers when he says that our Lord 'was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.' It was a great and solemn assembly, where Jesus met for the first time after his resurrection, and took his last farewell on earth with many of his most attached adherents. He then repeated to all the assembled disciples, thus publicly, the charge which the apostles had already received, to go and teach *all* nations, no longer restricting themselves to the Jews, as before his death; and that they might be sufficient for the services and sufferings before them, He gave them the assurance, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!'

There were probably many other interviews which Christ held with his apostles, both before and after they had returned to Jerusalem by his direction. In Acts i. 3, this is indeed plainly enough intimated. St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7) mentions one interview with James which is not historically recorded; and he says, that 'after that,' our Lord was 'seen of James, then of all the apostles,' probably at an appointed interview just before the Ascension. On that occasion He renewed the promise of that baptism of the Spirit through which they were to be guided into all the truth, and be made the efficient instruments of its promulgation.

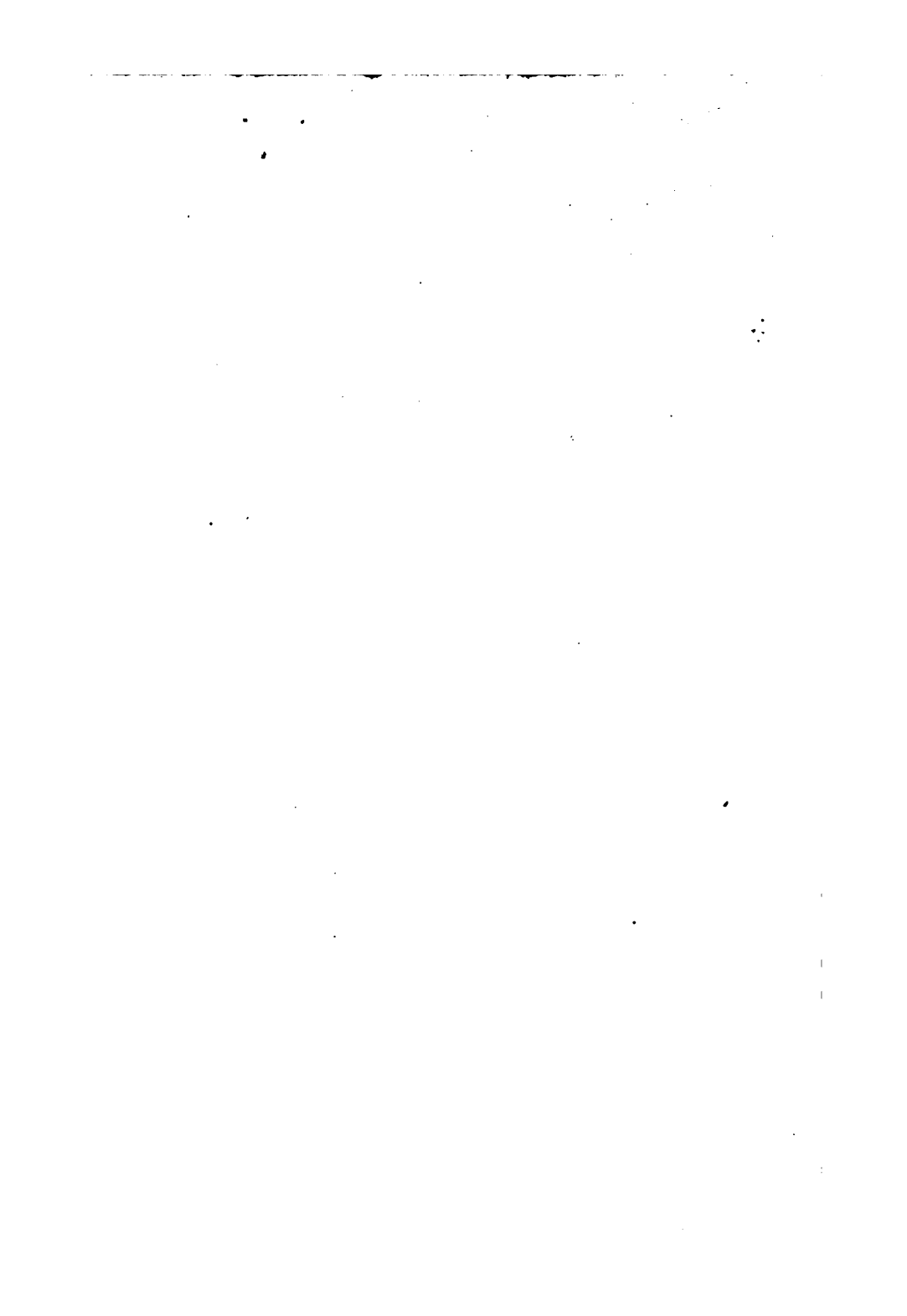
Forty days had now elapsed since our Lord had risen from

the tomb, when, during the discourse to which we have just referred, or in immediate connection with it, He conducted the disciples to the Mount of Olives, the scene of so many interesting events in his career. Here he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while his hands remained uplifted in blessing, He was parted from them, and taken up into heaven. A cloud soon hid Him from their view; but while they were still gazing upward, hopeful to catch one more glance of his receding form, 'two men in white apparel,' who were doubtless commissioned angels, were seen standing by, who addressed them, saying, 'This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.'

EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS.

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