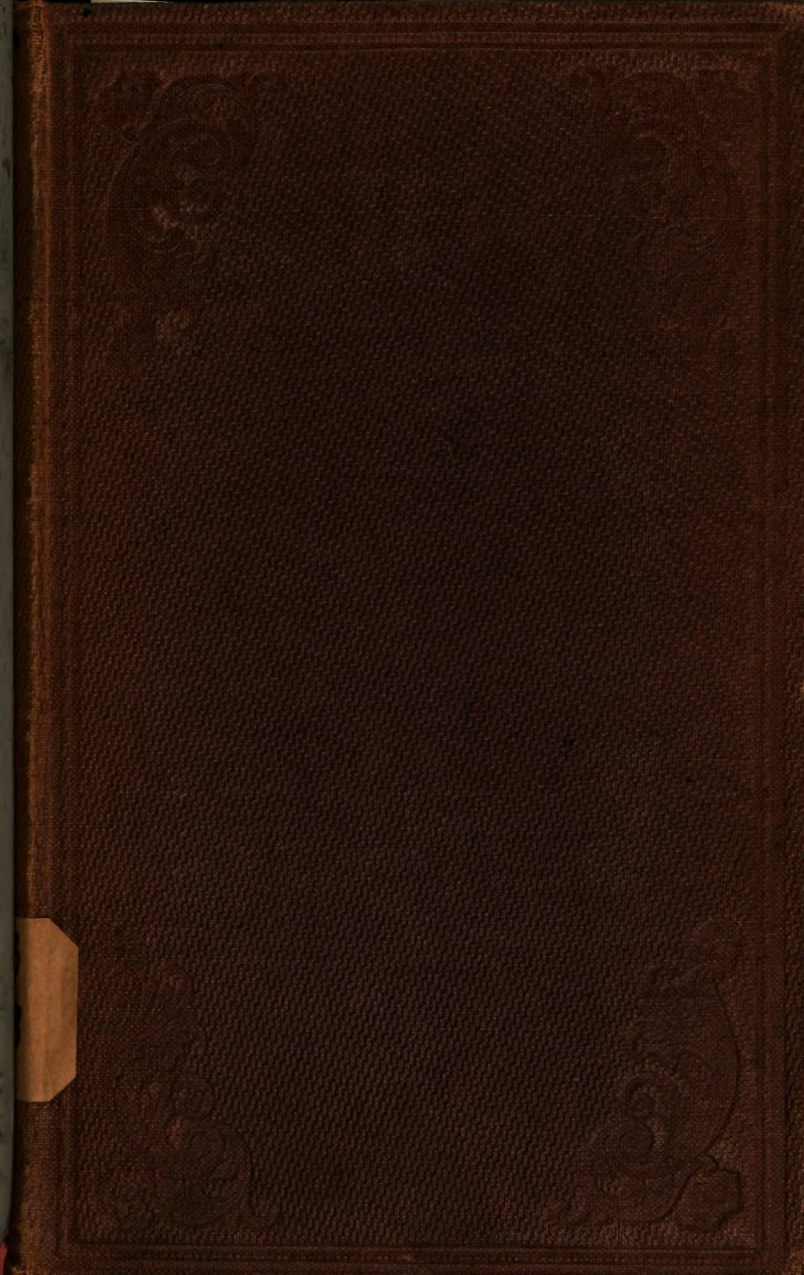
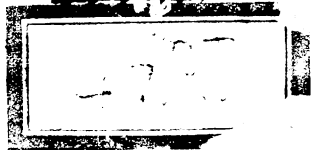

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ON
THE GOSPEL BY ST. LUKE.

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INTRODUCTION.

It has been observed elsewhere,* that each of the four Gospels has its own character and purpose, and that they are not merely coincident testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus simply explanatory or supplemental. And this is, as we also read in the same place, according to the manner of the Holy Ghost, as He spake by His servants of old. For in the First Book of Chronicles, for instance, we see David in a light different from that in which we see him in the Books of Samuel.

Accordingly, this Evangelist, St. Luke, though writing as another witness of the same divine truths, gives his Gospel peculiarity and character; and this tells us that, though thus concurring with others in general testimony, the Spirit of revelation has a special design by him.

But all this different service of the same Spirit by the different Evangelists, is not incongruity, but fulness and variety. The oil with which Aaron was anointed, and which was mystically the fulness and virtue that

* See "On the Gospel by St. John."—Introduction.—Sold at 1, Warwick Square.

rests on our adorable Lord, was made up of different odours, myrrh, calamus, cassia, and cinnamon. (Ex. xxx.) We may say that it is the office of one Evangelist after another, to produce different parts in this rare and sweet compound of the sanctuary, to tell out different excellencies and perfections in Jesus, the Christ of God. For who could tell out all? It was sufficient joy and honour for one servant, however favoured with such near revelations, to trace even one of them. The saint has the sweet profit of all together; and in language prepared for him, can turn to the Beloved, and say, "because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth."

Now in the midst of this various service thus distributed among the Evangelists, we shall find, I judge, that St. Luke occupies his peculiar place. The Lord, in St. Matthew, meets the Jew as their Messiah; in St. Mark, He meets a needy world as the servant of that need; in St. John, He meets the Church or heavenly family as the Son of the Father, to train them for their heavenly home; but here in St. Luke, He meets the human family, to speak with them as the one only sanctioned Son of man.

"Son of man" is a title of very extensive meaning. It expresses man in his perfectness, or man according to God. It tells us, as it were, that man stands "a new thing" in Jesus; and that in Him we see all possible human or moral beauty. But not only is all this

moral perfectness expressed by the title "Son of man" when applied to Jesus, but all His *suffering* and all His *dignities* are connected with Him as such. As Son of man, He was humbled so as to wonder that God should have any respect to Him (Ps. viii.), but as such He is also exalted to the right hand on high. (Ps. lxxx.) As such He had not where to lay His head (Luke ix. 58), but as such He also comes to the Ancient of Days to take the kingdom (Dan. vii. 13). Judgment is committed to Him as such (John v.); He is Prophet, Priest, and King, as such; Heir and Lord of all things; Head and Bridegroom of the Church. As Son of man, He has power on earth to forgive sin (Matt. ix. 6); and is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark ii. 28), though as the same He lay three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. xii. 40). He was the wearied Sower of the seed, and He will be the glorious Reaper of the harvest, as Son of man. He was crucified and raised again as such; but all the while, as such, had his proper place in heaven (John iii. 13, 14). And, by and bye, as the Son of man, He will be the centre of all things, heavenly and earthly, in the kingdom (John i. 51). For it was in man that God had, of old, set His image; and when the first man, who was of the earth, had broken that image, the Son of God undertook to restore it, and thus to accomplish in man the divine purpose by man, setting man in that place of honour and trust which God had of old provided for Him.

Thus, this title or name of the Lord is an extensive one, ranging over and linking itself with His person, with all His sorrow, and with all His dignities too, save such, of course, as He owns in Himself, being "God over all, blessed for ever." As the Son of man, therefore, He may be looked at in these three aspects. He is the *anointed* man,—the undefiled human temple raised at the beginning by the Holy Ghost, and then filled by Him (Luke i. 35; iv. 1). He is the *humbled* man, who travailed in sorrow here, down to the death of the cross. (Phil. ii.) He is the *exalted* man, crowned now with glory and honour, and by and bye to have all dominion. (Heb. ii.)

And, as Son of man, *He deals with man*; and in that action, I believe, our Evangelist especially presents Him to us. In this Gospel He converses with the human family; He knows man as a creature of certain faculties and passions, being Himself, all the while, the anointed man, the heavenly man, who came to exhibit man according to the mind of heaven, standing for the blessed God in the midst of the human family who had deeply revolted from Him. He was the only fair untainted fruit of the human soil; and thus, growing up in the midst, He exposes all beside.

This was His purpose. And that He might do this perfectly, and exhibit in Himself man according to God, and in all beside, man departed into evil, He is eminently the *social* one. And therefore in this Gospel

He is generally seen in human intercourse, and in places of resort, carrying thus the anointed man every where, to be found and read of all. And sweet indeed would it be, if we read the holy lesson better. In walking before the world, our path would be the purer, in walking together, it would be more refined and elevated. Not that we should put on the mode and sanctioned order of the world, but gracefully wear "the things that are lovely and of good report." And that would be the holy adorning of our doctrine. It would be the saint in the power of that love which behaveth itself not unseemly, but which exhibits the virtue and the praise that suit anointed men after the pattern of Jesus.

As such pattern we have Him here in St. Luke. This is the characteristic of this Gospel, I believe.

And I might observe the fitness of the penman to the peculiar task assigned him. For we hear of St. Luke in the divine history, as the companion of the Apostle of the Gentiles (Acts xvi. 11, Col. iv., 2 Tim. iv., Philem. 24). He became associated in labour with one, whose ministry, I may say, respected neither Jew nor Greek, but addressed itself to man as such. And indeed I believe that he himself had been a Gentile. His name is of Gentile character, and he seems to be distinguished, as others have remarked, from brethren who were of the circumcision, in Col. iv. 14.

And now, having thus gathered the general intent of our Gospel, and the person of its penman, I would

follow it in its order. But nothing less than the joy of the Lord in ourselves, and His praise in the thoughts and delights of His saints, should lead a step onward even in such holy paths as these. It should be the common delight of all His saints to trace Him in all His goings. For where are we to have our eternal joys but in Him and with Him? What, beloved, is suited to our delights, if Jesus and His ways be not? What is there in any object to awaken joy, that we do not find in Him? What are those affections and sympathies, which either command or soothe our hearts, that are not known in Him? Is love needed to make us happy? If so, was ever love like His? If beauty can engage the sense, is it not to perfection in Jesus? If the treasures of the mind delight us in another, if richness and variousness fill and refresh us, have we not all this in its fulness in the communicated mind of Christ? Indeed, beloved, we should challenge our hearts to find their joys in Him. For we are to know Him so for ever. And learning the perfections and beauties of His blessed word is one of the many helps which we have whereby to advance in our souls this joy in the Lord. May this present meditation serve this end in us, through the Spirit, for the Lord's sake!

ON

THE GOSPEL BY ST. LUKE.

It will be found, I believe very surely, that our Evangelist adopts what we may term a *moral* arrangement of his materials. There is, however, a beautiful historical simplicity also in the order of the events. And the following distribution of the parts of this Gospel, which may be considered as a kind of Table of Contents, will shew this.

1. The birth and early life of Christ - - - i., ii.
2. His baptism, genealogy, and temptation - - - iii., iv.
3. His ministry in Galilee - - - v.—ix. 50.
4. His journey to Jerusalem - - - ix. 51—xix. 27.
5. His entrance there, and all that followed
down to His crucifixion - - - xix. 28—xxiii.
6. His resurrection and its results - - - xxiv.

This shews the general order of the events ; and the arrangement of them is simple and beautiful. But still, our Lord being in this Gospel specially the Teacher, and dealing with men, we shall find great truths and principles in detached portions. The mere order of time is made to yield to this moral purpose. And my design in this little book is (together with general meditations), to watch and to notice what is characteristic.

CHAPTERS I., II.—I may consider these chapters together.

And in the very opening, I observe something which is strikingly characteristic. St. Luke addresses his friend Theophilus. No doubt he was his friend in a divine sense, his beloved in the Lord, his fellow in the love of God, and he addresses him in the hope that through this Gospel which he was about to publish, this his Christian friend and brother might be established and advanced in all that which had bound him and St. Luke together. But this was all in a style peculiar to Luke. *It was according to the grace of human affection*; for he would thus draw Theophilus with the bands of a man. And, moreover, he tells him of his own personal acquaintance with the things he was about to write, which none of the other Evangelists do, *thus bringing something of the human style into his holy task*. He appears himself before us, as having the faculties and affections of a man exercised about the things which were engaging him, and addressing another upon them in the same strain.

But though his words take this tone, and seem to flow in this channel, as the communications of one friend to another, yet the Holy Ghost is just as simply and fully in every thought and word of our Evangelist, as though he had been giving out what he had no personal knowledge of whatever. David knew that God had promised to raise up Christ to sit on his throne, yet spake he of the resurrection by inspiration as a prophet. (Acts ii.) The Lord Himself delivered commandments to His Apostles, yet we are told he did so, *through the Holy Ghost* (Acts i. 2). And all this helps to assure us of the equal and full inspiration of the whole scripture of God. Whether it be the

Lord commanding His Apostles, or Luke communicating with his friend, the one is not done merely in the personal authority of the Lord, nor the other in the personal knowledge of Luke, but both come to us under the seal of the Holy Ghost.

After this address to his friend by way of introduction, our Evangelist enters on his subject, great and blessed as it is, with all possible simplicity. Nothing can be more perfect in its season. The elevated tone in which the divine John begins his holy task of delineating the Son of God, is quite in character with so high a purpose. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It gives notice at once of what manner of revelation was coming. But here, we have something different altogether in style, but just as perfect in its place. "There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest." It is like a simple tale-telling, a tale of other days, when truth was wont to be plain and unvarnished. The mind is held for the moment, charmed with the artlessness of this, and yet with the skill of the divine hand which thus leads the thoughts, though into the deepest and most wondrous scenes, yet so gently by those cords, the strength of which the human heart knows so well. Little might we judge to what this is to lead, but the Spirit of revelation has us firmly by the hand, to take us where His grace and wisdom may please.

And the immediate scene is much of this character also, being laid in the midst of human sympathies and domestic affections. We are told of the circumstances attendant on the birth of the Baptist, and his

parentage. But simple as all this is, there are secrets in it.

Zacharias and Elizabeth appear before us as the Abraham and Sarah, the Isaac and Rebekah, the Elkanah and Hannah, of other days. They were in the place of righteousness, but they were childless. They were in the very place where the last prophet of Israel had put the righteous Remnant, remembering the law of Moses, and walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Mal. iv.) But, withal, they were childless, and thus witnesses to themselves that all their strength must be found in God, who by the same prophet had promised a Restorer. And all this righteousness in ordinances was as much a preparation for the promised messenger, as the acceptance of the messenger afterwards would have been a preparation for the Lord of the temple. To such, accordingly, is the Elijah, the promised messenger, now given; and his birth leads, as we find here, to the birth of the promised Lord of the temple (Mal. iii.), before whose face he was to go as the dawn before the day-spring.

And we notice a difference in the manner of these two births which is according to this. John comes forth, a child of promise, born by a special gift of God enduing the mother with a natural faculty. But Jesus comes forth, Son of God, born not through any endowment of nature, but by the Holy Ghost, beyond nature altogether. The one is the child of a barren wife, the other of a virgin. But this was a wondrous difference. Elizabeth was the mother of the saved, Mary of the Saviour. Elizabeth's child was the sanctified, Mary's the Sanctifier. This was a mighty dis-

tance. The child of a barren wife has always been the symbol of the saved, or of the family of God, for it tells us of the grace and gift of God towards those who had been found impotent and wanting (Is. liv. 1, John i. 13, Rom. ix. 8). But this was the first and only child of a virgin, and He tells us that, though partaking of flesh and blood because of the children, in the fulness of His person He was altogether above nature.

Such is the dawn, and such the day-spring here. These are the prophet of the Highest, and the Highest Himself, the messenger and the God of Israel. Till now all had been but darkness. The dispensation of the law (as a covenant of works) had but proved man to be darkness, and had left him so; and (as a witness of good things to come) it had but dispensed the shadows of them, which, while they acted as stars in the night, told that night was still overhanging the earth. But another season is now approaching—a season in which God, and not man, was to appear, and “God is light.”

Such a season is here introduced, and introduced too with all due solemnities—solemnities full of gladness and liberty. Such ever wait on the blessed God, when He comes forth. The foundations of the first creation were laid with shouts of joy (Job xxxviii. 7). And that was the pledge from heaven that it was God’s purpose to make his creatures happy. And this indeed is His *necessary* purpose, for “God is love.” And so in these chapters. The foundations of another creation are here laid in the infant of Bethlehem, and again all is gladness, both in heaven and earth. God is reappearing, and there must be joy, for sorrow cannot stay where He is. “Glory and honour are in His

presence—strength and gladness in His place.” The bread of mourning must not be eaten in His sanctuary, for joy as well as holiness dwell there. So here, all is joy. Hosts of angels celebrate praise—the shepherds repeat the glad tidings of good things—the lips of Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth are unsealed to tell out wonders of grace—the expectation of old Simeon is answered—the widowhood of Anna is over—and the very babe in the womb leaps for joy. Old men and maidens, young men and children, all have their share in this moment of richer joy than when the morning stars sang together. The joy of creation, it is true, soon ceased, and groans were heard instead, for man quickly defiled God’s handy-work. But still its foundations were laid with singing. So here, this joy may soon be hushed in this evil world, and the daughter of Zion prove herself unready for it, and we may have to learn that the songs of heaven fall on a heavy heart, and get no response from earth ; but still the foundations of this, as of the former work of God, are laid in holy gladness.

How beautifully indeed do these chapters rise upon our view ! A long and dreary season, from the days of the return from Babylon, had now past ; but here the morning breaks, the heavens are opened, and the wastes of Israel are re-visited.

And all was in the twinkling of an eye. Who had counted on this a day before ? The priest was at the accustomed altar ; the virgin of Nazareth at home in the ordinary circumstances of human life ; and the shepherds, as they were wont, watching their flocks,—when the glory of the Lord shines, and one fresh from

the presence of God appears. And Gabriel can stand without reserve in the holy place with the priest, and without reluctance in the poor dwelling of the virgin. Such are the ease and grace of these heavenly visits—happy pledges of days still brighter, still to come! But Gabriel the messenger, though he stand at the altar, will not, like the angel-Jehovah of old (Judg. xiii. 20), ascend in the flame of the altar; nor like Jesus-Jehovah afterwards, though He stand in the temple, speak of Himself as greater than the temple. For he fills his place as a servant, and takes no higher.

This is blessed. It is all blessed. But these days will have a brighter original in the days of the coming kingdom. Then the angels of God shall again ascend and descend, and this ease and graciousness and brilliancy and joy shall all be more than known again. The pledges will be more than made good. For this is the way of our God. He will interpret the doing of His hand, and make all plain; He will exceed the promises of His grace, and make all blessed.

I might observe, also, the magnificent utterances of the Spirit through His vessels and channels in these chapters. What an overflowing mind and affection bursts from the lips of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon.* And O how happy, when our hearts can flow on somewhat in company with them, and be filled with even a

* The Jews, we are told, frequently wrote of their Messiah, under the name of "The Menachem," or Comforter, as Simeon here is described to be waiting for the "consolation of Israel," i.e., for the Messiah. And it has been thought that this leads the Lord Himself to use the expression, speaking of the Holy Ghost, "*another* Comforter."

little of this same spiritual affection ! But the soul knows its heaviness too well !

Such, then, was the birth of these two children, and such the attending joy of heaven and earth, recorded in these strikingly beautiful chapters. In the progress of them, we get other notices of these holy children. Their growth in stature and in wisdom, while they were yet young, are given to us here, but here only. And this is quite according to that purpose of the Spirit in this Gospel which I have already noticed. For *the man* is thus kept before us. These glances at the childhood and youth of the Lord are all sweet and touching in themselves, and in character with our Gospel. He was the anointed child now, as He will be the anointed man by and bye. In each season equally and perfectly well pleasing to God, consecrating every period of human life. Here we see Him in subjection to His parents at Nazareth, in favour too with man as well as with God. For all this was fruit in season. He had not yet been called to witness for God against the world. When the seasons for that comes, we shall see Him to perfection then also, and getting the due hatred, as now He gets the due favour, of men (John vii. 7). But as yet he is only the perfect child, at home in subjection to His parents, graced with every goodly ornament that suited such an one, and thus commending Himself to the hearts and consciences of all.

Holy diligence in attaining all godly wisdom marks this dear and perfect child also. Every year brought duly with it just its proper increase. But God Himself was His study, His only study ; for the temple, as

we see here, was the scene for the display of what He had been acquiring in this season of holy diligent pupilage. Many will run to and fro and increase knowledge of various kinds, getting it in the busy schools of men. But all the knowledge which this holy child sought or acquired, was knowledge that suited the sanctuary. He did not bring forth the fruit of His diligence in the schools, but in the temple of God.

Man, however, is but little prepared for this, and so we find it here. His kindred in the flesh do not understand this child. They are pleased, perhaps, that He has attractions as a goodly child ; and they judge that He is in the company, detained there by the desire of others to see and observe Him. A mother's vanity might suggest that.* But when they miss Him, they look for Him where the flesh would have sought Him. But He was not there. And in all this, poor human nature is exposed. In the vanity, the misdirected search, the amazement, and the ignorant rebuke of Mary, man is shewn out. Jesus the anointed child can thus begin to expose the corrupted nature. "Wist ye not," He can say unto them. Surely this child might say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation ; I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." And sweet is the comfort of all this to us. Blessed it is to know that our God has had one object, a Son of man too, on this earth of ours, in which His whole soul delighted. This is blessed. But

* See another striking instance of the same mind in Mary, in John ii. 3.

of Jesus *only* is this so. As one of our own Poets has said,—

“ There has one object been disclosed on earth
That might commend the place; but now 'tis gone—
Jesus is with the Father.”

III.—A long interval has now passed before we reach the time of this chapter. Like that of Moses in his youth, as I may call it, the course of Jesus had been interrupted through the reasonings and darkness of nature. Moses had supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them; but they understood not, and their unbelief separated Him from them for forty years.

So Jesus, the Greater than Moses, was doing His Father's business in the midst of Israel; but His brethren understood not, and He had to go down to Nazareth, estranged from Israel for another season. He can but pass it, however, in the same perfectness before God. Man's unbelief may change the scene, but nothing touched the heart of this holy one. He went down to Nazareth to be in subjection there, still as a goodly child increasing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man.

But here, in this chapter, we enter on other scenes and times altogether. The children have grown up, and are ripe for their shewing unto Israel. And just at this solemn moment, our Evangelist takes a full survey of the world. It was a task which properly belonged to him under the Spirit, for the Spirit through him, as I have said, looks at man, and deals with man. He here shews us how still and at rest the whole earth was sitting, for the Gentile beast had all in order,

according to its mind (Zech. i. 11). Tiberius the Roman was emperor, his proconsuls were in their several governments, Judea itself being a member of his strength, and part of his honour. The priests, too, were in their temple. All in the earth, both as to its religion and government, were just as man would have it. But under the eye of God, all this was a wilderness; and instead, therefore, of His taking a place in it, and owning it as repose to Him, the voice of His servant is sent forth to awaken it all, like Elijah in the evil days of Ahab, and to disturb the sleep of carnal contentment in which man and the world were folded.

God's thoughts are indeed not as man's thoughts. Man's sabbath was now a wilderness to Him, and He will act on it as a wilderness. The dispensation of the law had, by this time, tested man, and found him to be hopelessly departed from righteousness; and John is now, according to this, sent forth to call on man to take the place of a convicted sinner. He points to the remedy that was in God for such an one, but he does not reveal it as already accomplished, and brought in. He announces the vanity of all flesh, uncovering the very roots of it, but his hand did not carry the seed of a better harvest. He laid the sentence of death in man, but he did not bring in life for him. He put him in the dust, but gave him no power to rise. The life and power was to come in by the Son afterwards. "John did no miracle." He challenged the violent to take the kingdom by force, but He did not set before them an open door. "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness to that light." He stood between Israel and their God, telling Israel, on the one hand,

that they were all flesh, and that flesh was as grass ; pointing to Jehovah-Jesus, God of Israel, on the other, as bringing His reward with Him, and doing His work before Him.

There was a mixture of grace and righteousness in his ministry. "He came in the way of righteousness," standing apart and refusing contact with the world, and thus by his light rebuking its darkness. He mourned to his generation, neither eating nor drinking, because he called on men to know themselves to be sinners, and to take their place as such. But then he came in the way of grace also, because he was the forerunner of Jesus, and went before the face of the Lord to prepare the way of salvation and the kingdom. Thus there was a mixture of grace and righteousness in his ministry, and it was clearly quite an advance upon both the law and the prophets. The law had sought to order man in the flesh according to righteousness ; and the prophets had been sent, in one sense, as in aid of the law, to call the people back to obedience, so that every help and advantage might be rendered to man, and God's abounding patience proved in the trial of this question, whether or not man were able to restore himself and stand in righteousness. But John's ministry assumed the vanity of all expectations of this kind, and took up man as a *convicted sinner*. But then, such is the holy order in the divine wisdom, it was not so high a ministry as that which has been now brought in. The Apostles, after the resurrection, called on man to take by faith the place of a *pardoned sinner*. And thus over us, the light of grace and salvation has reached its noon-day strength, and we

are waiting only for the light of glory and the kingdom.

With our God, let me here say, there has been, from the beginning, a work far deeper and more excellent than that of the *old creation*. The old creation was, in some sense, left at man's disposal. His allegiance or disobedience were to determine its history. But the divine counsel from before the creation had planned and laid a work in, and by, *the word*, which could never fail, or be contingent on any strength less than His own. And it is this mystery which the Lord has before Him when He says "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Creation was removable, redemption (the work of the Word) is immovable, because the living God has joined Himself with it. And thus the prophet, addressing Jesus the Word, says "of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand—*they* shall perish, but *thou* shalt endure." And so all things that are *made* may be shaken (Heb. xii. 27), for God Himself is not joined to them, He is not their foundation. But to the work of the Word God has joined Himself, for the Word was with God, and was God, and was made flesh, and became part and parcel (so to speak of this blessed mystery of everlasting goodness) of the work itself. He is the vine of the branches, the chief corner-stone, and head-stone of the building. This gives redemption an unspeakably more excellent glory than creation ever had. And thus the Baptist, in the ministry which we have in this chapter of our gospel, says, "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

All in this work is incorruptible. The seed of the life which it brings is incorruptible—the body with which it will clothe that life is incorruptible—the inheritance to which it introduces is incorruptible (1 Cor. xv., 1 Pet. 1). God has entered through the breach which man's sin produced in the old creation, and has joined Himself with the mighty ruin, in such a way, and for such an end, as will be to the everlasting praise of His own most blessed name, and also to the sure abiding and imperishableness of this His new creation.

The 90th Psalm appears to be the utterance of a soul that has learnt something of this mystery. The prophet looks to God Himself as above all created strength, he then traces the vanity which had attended the old creation, and at last finds his relief from such a sight in God's work of mercy, or the work of redemption by the Word. And this is so with us, beloved. The work of the Word, or of God made flesh, is the relief of our hearts from the painful sense of the universal vanity around us. John's ministry might lead the soul into that sense of vanity, but it remained for another to give us this blessed and sure relief in Himself, and His work, that standeth for ever.

But this only by the way, as we pass on, in connection with the ministry of the Baptist which this chapter gives us.—The Lord's genealogy is then traced up to the sources of the *human* family; not to David and to Abraham as in Matthew, but to Adam. And this, I need not say, is quite according to the general mind of the Spirit in St. Luke, which I have already spoken of. And the absence of all such genealogies in St. John, is, in the same way,

entirely consistent. For genealogies recognize human or national relations; and the preserving of them, as is done in the Jewish scriptures (see 1 Chron. &c., &c.), shews a jealousy for the order and maintenance of the human system. That system will be sustained in the kingdom, when the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children. But *we* are told not to mind genealogies (1 Tim. i. 4, Titus iii. 9), for the Church is not to be the minister for ordering and maintaining the human system, but is taken into heavenly relations.

But before I enter on the following chapter, I would observe that our Lord's Sonship of God is here owned at the time of His baptism, as had been done at the time of His birth before, and is to be done at His transfiguration afterwards (i. 35., ix. 56). But there is distinct value in each.—The virgin's child, from the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, was to be called "the Son of God." His *person* merely was then owned.—Now at His baptism, the same attestation is made a second time, with this addition, "with whom I am well pleased." His *ministry* is now owned (for His baptism was introducing Him to His ministry), owned to be that which would awaken full divine complacency. And this is blessedly comforting to us sinners. The law was never thus approved, for the law exalted righteousness. John the Baptist was never thus approved, for he convicted man without relieving him. But now that the Son was coming forth with grace and healing for sinners, God's mind could rest, for this was the accomplishing of the purpose of His

own love, and thus it could now be said of the Son and His ministry, or of the Son at His baptism, "thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."—And by and bye He will, for the third time, be so attested, when the glory or kingdom shines for a moment on the holy mount. Then this same attestation will come forth with this addition, "hear Him." But this is equally perfect in its season, for this owned Him in *His kingdom*—every knee must bow to Him, and the soul *that will not hear Him* be cut off from among his people.

Thus on three occasions—at His birth, His baptism, and His transfiguration, His Sonship of God is divinely attested; in other words, His *person*, His *ministry*, and His *dominion*, are all owned of the Father; the full pleasure of God resting on Him, and the full subjection of the earth demanded for Him. God is well pleased in Him, and the earth is to hear Him. And after these attestations by the voice from heaven, the resurrection in due season comes to verify and close them all by act and deed, and to declare Jesus to be the Son of God with power (Rom. i. 4).

IV.—But Satan could not allow all this. Jesus owned as Son of God, and that, too, in connection with the human family, as Adam had been (iii. 22, 38), Satan could not allow. He could not let this claim be revived without contesting it; for through his subtilty the first man had lost this dignity. God had created man, and in His likeness made him, but man had begotten children "in his own likeness" (Gen. v. 1, 3), defiled as he was, and not as a race worthy of being

called "sons of God." But Jesus had now appeared to re-assert in man this lost dignity. The devil must, therefore, try His title to it ; and with this purpose he comes now to tempt Him, saying, "if thou be the Son of God." This was a crisis between the anointed man and man's great enemy. And surely He stood, stood in the loftiest attitude of a conqueror. Everything that had surrounded Adam the first man might well have pleaded for God against the enemy. The sweetness of the whole scene, the beauty of that garden of delights, with its rivers which parted hither and thither, the fruits and perfume, with the willing service of ten thousand tributary creatures, all had a voice for God against the accuser. But Jesus was in a wilderness which yielded nothing, but left Him an hungred, and the wild beasts were with Him, and all might have been pleaded by the accuser against God. All was against Jesus, as all had been for Adam, but He stood as Adam had fallen. The man of the dust failed with all to favour him ; the Man of God stood with all against Him. And what a victory was this ! What complacency in man must this have restored to the mind of God ! To achieve this victory Jesus had been led up of the Spirit into this place of battle, for His commission was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John iii. 8). He stood now as the champion of God's glory and man's blessing, in this revolted world, to try His strength with the enemy of both, to make proof of His ministry, and to the highest pitch of praise He is more than conqueror.

But He was conqueror for us, and therefore at once comes forth with the spoils of that day to lay them at

our feet. He had been alone in conflict with the enemy, but would not enjoy the victory alone. He that soweth and he that reapeth must rejoice together. It was an ancient statute of David, that he that tarried by the stuff should share with him that went down to the battle. And it was a decree worthy the grace of "the beloved." But a better even than David, one not only of royal, but of divine, grace is here; and accordingly Jesus, the Son of God, comes forth from the wilderness to publish peace, to heal disease, to meet all the need of those who were the captives of this enemy, and to let them know that He had conquered for them.

This tells us the character of the blessing which we sinners get from the hand of the Son of God. *We get it as spoils of conquest.* By sin we have forfeited all creation blessing. All such was once ours in Eden, but we lost it there, and now all blessing is the fruit of the victory of Jesus. And this gives the heart assurance while enjoying it, for we read our title to it, while we take it. The Blessor has entitled Himself to bless, for He has won the blessing before He confers it. We therefore know our right to be blest in Jesus, as surely as Adam knew his to be happy in Eden. And what doubt could he have had? It is not stolen waters that we drink, nor bread eaten in secret that we feed upon, but meat won from the very jaws of the eater, and sweetness gathered from the strong. This is the character of the blessing which the Lord is giving to us sinners. It is His own well-earned spoils. And such do we get here. Full of the Holy Ghost (ver. 1), He met the devil in conflict, to withstand and overthrow

him; full of the Holy Ghost still (ver. 14), He meets sinners with blessing to heal and to save them. And since this day in the wilderness, He has been with the devil on Calvary, and there by death destroyed him, and has come forth in resurrection, again to part His spoils with sinners all the world over; and with certainty of heart we survey and enjoy the glorious blessings.

But where is the sinner to value the blessing, and to array himself with the spoils of the conquering Son of God? That is the question, the only question now. Man has no mind for the blessing, and cares not about a victory and its spoils, in which the god of this world has been judged. The synagogue at Nazareth now shews us what man is, as the wilderness has just shewn us what Satan is. The stuff that we have tarried with is better, in our esteem, than the fruit of victory which our David brings with Him. This is now seen at Nazareth. Human desire is stirred for a moment. The people in the synagogue wonder at the gracious words of Jesus, and they fasten their eyes on Him; but this current of human desire is met by a stronger current of human pride which sets in against it, and all this delight in the grace of Jesus goes. They hang on his lips for a moment, but the pride that suggested "is not this the carpenter's son?" overpowered the attraction after a very short struggle, and their goodness was found to be as the morning cloud or early dew that passeth away.

And so it is, beloved. Enmity to God and His anointed must win the day in the heart of man, whenever such a conflict as this is fairly raised. Where it is simply between mere human delight or admiration

of Jesus, and the strength of nature, this scene in the synagogue at Nazareth tells us what the end of the struggle will be. The stuff in the heart, or in the house, is more heeded than the blessing of God. Before now, man has sold that blessing for thirty pieces of silver, and even (if anything could be more worthless) for a mess of pottage. And this is a solemn thought. He that trusteth his heart is a fool, for God cannot trust it. There is nothing in man that God can trust. Some believed when they saw the miracles that Jesus did, but Jesus would not commit Himself unto them. Nothing of the natural man will do. "Ye must be born again." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Resolutions will go before temptations, and the bands of man be broken by Satan. Communion with God in the truth through the Spirit, will alone stand the soul, but the native strength of the stoutest will go to pieces.

But this chapter shews us also that the love of the Son of God was not to be wearied or worn out; for leaving Nazareth He goes down to Capernaum with the same spoils of war. His love was stronger than all repulse then, as since then, it has proved itself stronger than death. "Love," surely we may say, "never faileth." And the Son of God is still going through this world of sinners with these same spoils, as fresh as though they had been gathered yesterday, to know who will rejoice with Him in them.

Such is this chapter which opens the ministry of the Son of God according to St. Luke; and as in this Gospel He is specially dealing with man, we have here at once strikingly displayed to us what man is. Like

the drawing by the preacher. "There was a little city and few men in it, and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it; and there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." The synagogue at Nazareth proves all this against the citizens of this world.

V.—We now enter on the 5th chapter, the materials of which, generally, we find in other Gospels. I would specially notice only what is characteristic.

I may observe again, that our Evangelist is not very careful about mere circumstances (as the order of time and the like), because he deals rather with men and with principles. And so would it be among ourselves. If one were narrating to another some events in order to acquaint him with the events, he would be careful to note accurately the details of time and place; but if he were using the events only for the purpose of illustrating principles or enforcing truths, he would be less careful as to such things. Thus we have, in this chapter, a scene which in point of time preceded much that we have already had in the previous chapter. The call of Simon to be a fisher of men, for instance, actually preceded the healing of his wife's mother, but here it follows it. (See Matt. iv., viii., Mark i.) But that is nothing to St. Luke. His purpose is not to determine which came the first, but to give us principles, to give us God and man. And accordingly, while he is careless as to circumstances, he discloses

great moral principles in the call of Simon, which the other Evangelists had not noticed.

And striking indeed is this disclosure. It gives us a view of man brought really under the power of God. There was nothing in a draught of fishes, let it have been as large and unexpected as it might, that in the way of nature connected itself with conviction of sin. But in the way of God there was. For it is ever the discovery of God that leads to repentance or true conviction of sin. It is only in God's light that we can duly know ourselves. It was the common judgment of all those who in old time owned the fear of God, that they could not see Him and live. They had carried that conscience with them ever since Adam had retreated from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. Manoah judged that he must die because he had seen God. Gideon looked for the same. Ezekiel fell on his face, and Daniel's comeliness was changed into corruption, when they came in contact with the glory. Isaiah learnt the uncleanness of his lips, when he saw the King, the Lord of hosts. This was rightly learning themselves, not by themselves or among themselves, but by God. They found that they came short of His glory (Rom. iii. 23).

So is it now with Peter. The glory had come very near him. Others might not have perceived it. What was a large draught of fishes to ordinary fishermen but a lucky cast? But a little matter will speak great things in the ear of a soul that God is leading. A hole in the wall is enough to show a prophet great abominations; and to such an one a cloud no bigger than a man's hand is full of God's works and praise.

A draught of fishes is now the glory to a heaven-led sinner ; and the glory is no sooner at his side, than like others of old, Peter learns himself. His eyes see God, and he abhors himself in dust and ashes.

This knowledge of ourselves by the light of God forms the principle of repentance. We may read many a blotted page in our history, and be sorry and ashamed of it; but to read ourselves in the light of the glory and presence of God leads to that repentance which the Spirit works. We learn that we are black when the sun looks upon us (Cant. i.), when the burning brightness of the glory rises upon us, as here upon Peter.

And let me add, that as we learn ourselves in this way, so do we learn God. As my trespasses and follies may tell me much of myself, but as I shall not know myself duly and thoroughly till I see myself in the light of God's glory, so God's works may tell me much of Him, His power and Godhead, but I shall not know Him really as He is, till I see Him by the darkness of my own iniquity. Then it is I learn God indeed, when I see Him in the face of Jesus Christ, providing for me a sinner, and rolling my darkness and shame away for ever in the abounding riches of His grace. It was thus Adam learnt God. The six days' works of God's hand did not give Adam all that God had for him, or tell Adam all that God was to him. It was his transgression that drew out the full treasure. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," was the word that fully told Adam what God was. The woman's seed was a secret which creation had not declared ; it was a treasure richer than all the fruit of

Eden, and which, grace abounding over sin, and not the labour of creating hands, had made Adam's. Adam then learnt God indeed, and the sinner so learns Him now. And this is the sequel of the mystery of death and life—we learn ourselves, all darkness as we are, in the light of the divine glory; we learn God, all goodness as He is, by the evil of our own sin.

Blessed truths these are which our Evangelist here leads us into. The scene is peculiar to him, but quite in the way of the Spirit, who by him traces our Lord as the Great Teacher, dealing with men's hearts and consciences, and with truths and principles. And upon this scene, I would further observe, that *the sinking* here was no alarm to Peter, as it was afterwards. (Matt. xiv.) Here he does not feel it, or think about it, for his soul was big with other thoughts, and his eye with other objects altogether, so that he had no place for thoughts of himself, or for fear. For this is the true healing of doubt and fear and all confusion. And what a pity it is, that this fresh sense of the fulness that is in Jesus should ever cool. It was *after* this that Peter feared the waters, because it was *after* this that his vision was less occupied with Christ. O the shame and the sorrow of all this! But have not the brightest in our company failed, dear brethren? Even David, who stands among us (the redeemed of the Lord), in so dear and honoured a place, when a stripling in the fight, could say even to a giant, "this day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand;" but *afterwards* said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Well for us indeed that one has stood through life and in death, to the perfect good

pleasure and praise of our heavenly Father. Saul's hand which David feared, was not so big as Goliath's hand which David despised ; but then Christ was not so large and full before the eye of David's faith afterwards, as He had been before in the valley of Elah.

But into the further details of this chapter I do not enter. We have them, generally, in other gospels. There are however at the close of it a few words which are peculiar to our Evangelist, and which I would therefore notice. "No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better."

This is still in the character of this Gospel, for it discloses another great secret in human nature, the power of man's habits and associations, and which, humanly, so hinders the power of God in his soul. We have been feeding upon the *old* wine (that which the flesh has been providing for us from our birth), and our appetite for the *new* wine (that which the Son of God has brought with Him since nature and the flesh) is spoiled. We are all conscious of this. "How can ye do good," says the prophet, "who are *accustomed* to do evil?" Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? And here the great Prophet, in like wisdom, warns us, that "no man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new."

And it is, beloved, a solemn warning. All things are possible with God, it is most true, and He giveth more grace. But still we do well to take heed against relishing the old wine. Every thought that we follow, every desire that we indulge, savours of either the old or the new. It is a draught (small it may be), but still it is a draught of one or the other. And this

leaves a solemn word behind it on the heart and conscience of each of us. What are you thinking of, what are you tasting now? we may say to our souls through the day. Is it provision for the flesh you are making, or is it a walk in the sanctuary? Comes it from heaven or from hell? And oftentimes the saint has to learn, to his sorrow and shame, at the end, the provision he had been making by the way. The patriarch was not drunk at the beginning, but he became a husbandman, planted a vineyard, and then drank of the wine. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" the soul may indignantly reply; but if the *hidden tempers* of the dog be allowed, his *active fury* will break out in time. "Walk in the Spirit," that's the divine security, "and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And surely, beloved, a little of that walking should enable us to change the speech, and to say, the *new* is better. That is what our blessed Lord would have. The holy watchful habit of denying the flesh, its tempers and its lusts, will keep the appetite fresh and ready for this new and better wine; and into all this, may the gentle and yet strong hand of the Spirit lead our souls daily!

VI. Here we again have what we have in Matthew and Mark. But I observe that the appointment of the Apostles is made *after prayer*; and this is not noticed by the other Evangelists. As also on other occasions, the same notice of the Lord in prayer is peculiar to Luke. But this still shews us that the Lord is here before us rather as a *Man*,

than either as a Jew, or the Son of God. For a Jew, considered as under the law, was not properly called to pray, for the law put him on his own strength ; but prayer, being the expression of dependence, is the first duty of a creature like man, who should learn to wait on God as his all sufficiency and strength.

This ordination of the Twelve bound them, from henceforth, peculiarly around the person of the Lord. For they were to be with Him (Mark iii. 14). Upon which, however, I would suggest a thought or two, which I believe the soul may use to holy profit.

There is a difference between *intimacy* and *familiarity*. I may be familiar with the condition and circumstances in which another commonly walks, but have very little real intimacy with himself—as in the case of servants. And this has its strong illustration in the history of the Lord.

The Centurion, the Syrophenician, or Mary the sister of Lazarus, were comparatively but little with Him. They are not seen in company with Him wherever He goes, but cross His path, to say the most, only occasionally. But when they are brought to deal with Him, they do so with most bright and blessed intelligence. They shew that they knew Him—who and what He really was. They make no mistakes about Him ; while even the Apostles, who waited on Him day after day, betrayed, again and again, the ignorance and distance of mere nature.

Is there not a lesson in this for us ? Is there not fear lest familiarity with the things of Christ be much more than the soul's real acquaintance with Himself ? I may be often, so to speak, handling these things. I

may be reading the books which tell of Him. I may be busy in the activities which make His service their object. I may speak, nay write, about Him, while others, like the centurion, may be a good deal withdrawn from all this, but their growth in divine knowledge, and living understanding of Him, may be far more advancing. Saul had David about him, even in his household, at his bidding, as his minstrel, when he needed or wished him ; but Saul did not know David.

Surely this is a lesson for us, beloved. The multitude who waited on the Lord, and watched His steps, must have been able to give even Mary of Bethany, had she sought it, much *information* about Him. Hundreds in the land, as well as the Twelve, might have told her what He had been doing, where He had been journeying, the discourses He had delivered, and the miracles he had wrought. Information like this they had in abundance, and she but sparingly, save as she was debtor to them for it. But all that, I need not say, left them far behind her in real acquaintance with Him. And is it not so still? How many of us can give information about the things of Christ, and answer inquiries correctly too, while the soul of the instructed sits and feasts on the things themselves far more richly. For the knowledge that a Mary may gather from the report of a multitude, nay from the lips of Apostles, often becomes another thing with her than it had previously been with them. A poor stranger making her modest and yet earnest way to Jesus, in the crowd, may shame the thoughts of those who were entitled to be the nearest to Him ; yea, of Peter himself (chap. viii. 45).

We need not so much to covet information about Him, but power to use divinely what we know; to turn it, through the energy of the Spirit, into matter of communion, and the feeding and enlivening of our renewed affections. Then and then only is it what our God would have it to be. Col. iii. 16, may teach us, that, while inquiring after knowledge, and laying up "the word of Christ," the material of all wisdom, we should take care to nourish the simpler affections of the soul. "Melody in the heart" should be the companion of the indwelling word of wisdom and knowledge. If it be not, the knowledge will be wanting in its savour, and in its power to refresh either ourselves or others.

This, at the same time, let me say, is not to lead us to give up action, or if it may be, daily companionship with the interests and people of Jesus in the world. Perfection is likeness to Himself; and in that living pattern we see this—busy in service wherever or whenever a need called Him, but all the while, in spirit, in the deep sense of the presence of God. Here alone lies the way that is fully according to the great original. As one sweetly says, pressing on the soul this grace of communion combined with service—

"Child-like, attend what thou wilt say,
Go forth and do it while 'tis day,
Yet never leave my sweet retreat."

This, however, only as we pass on—if the Lord give us some profit from it.

The holy instructions which we get in the progress of this chapter are found in the sermon on the mount in Matthew. We need not determine whether the Lord delivered them on two different occasions, one of

which is given us by the one Evangelist, and the other by the other, or whether the very same occasion is recorded differently by them.* The Spirit, I am assured, designs to serve a more general purpose by our Evangelist than by Matthew. In Matthew the Lord's words are recorded, as though He were very particularly addressing himself to a Jewish ear. There are instructions there which would exclusively, I may say, reach the conscience of a Jew, awakening in his mind recollections of the law and the prophets. These are omitted here, and the Lord speaks as having *man* before Him. The sayings of them "of old time," that which was "the law and the prophets," errors in fastings, alms-deeds and prayers, which so prevailed among the Jews, get no notice here; but all that was *moral*, applying itself to the heart and conscience of man, does.†

And this is so according to the mind of that perfect Teacher, whose instructions are here and there thus variously delivered. He was sent to the circumcision, it is true. He could not, in actual ministry, pass the Jewish boundary, but He could see *man* through the Jew; and it has been the good pleasure of the Holy

* It has, however, been observed by others, that the sermon in Matthew was delivered on a *mountain* and this in a *plain* (Matt. v. 1; Luke vi. 17). And instances are given of the Lord preaching the same things at different times. Compare Matt. ix. 32—34, and xii. 22—24. Matt. xvi. 21, xvii. 23, and xx. 17, 19.

† The warnings against covetousness (which of course are of this general or moral character), are an exception to this, for though they are found in Matthew, they are omitted here. But we shall find that they are thus omitted, only in order to bring them out in another place of this Gospel, in connection with other scenes and truths which were morally more suited to them. (See chap. xii.)

Ghost, to shew us by St. Luke the Lord's mind reaching out and apprehending man in this way, dealing with the *human*, and not merely with the *Jewish* conscience and affections.

VII.—This chapter opens with another instance, in our Evangelist, of disregard of mere circumstances and order of time ; for the place which the case of the Centurion fills in this Gospel, is not according to that which it holds in the others. And there are other touches in this narrative peculiar and characteristic. Thus, we learn here of his sending the Jews to the Lord in his behalf, a circumstance which Matthew does not notice. Because Matthew, writing more immediately for the Jewish converts, would not record that feature in the case which might have nourished the old national pride ; but Luke, writing more for the Gentiles, would keep in their mind the ancient favour in which the others once stood with God. Both of these things had their moral value, which the Spirit would surely consult. So, with a like moral intent, our Evangelist does not notice the Lord's comment on the faith of this Gentile as Matthew does—the Jewish Evangelist noticing this, as it might help to check the rising of a Jewish boast ; the other not noticing it, for it might have helped to raise a similar feeling in the mind of a Gentile.

These distinctions appear to me to be perfect in their place. And then we get (and only here) the case of the widow of Nain, a case so tenderly affecting

the human heart, that it properly lay under the notice of the Spirit in St. Luke. For in the style of one who was looking at man, and his sorrows and affections, our Evangelist tells us, that the young man who had died "was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;" and again, when the Lord raised him to life, that "he delivered him to his mother." These are strokes and touches quite according to the human tones which have their happy and gracious current through the mind of the Lord in this Gospel. And the little word "only" is peculiar to Luke. It is used in the case of Jairus's daughter, and of the man whose child was possessed with an evil spirit, and here in the case of the widow of Nain. And such a word would appeal to the tender heart of the Son of man, and is lovely and touching in its place. Would that we caught more of the same tender spirit, while delighting at the discovery of it in Jesus!

And I cannot refuse to notice, in connection with this chapter, what has struck me in the Gospels—the ease with which our blessed Lord allowed the vail to fall from Him at the bidding of faith. In old time, when a king of Israel was asked to heal a man of his leprosy, he turned in a rage, and said, "am I God to kill and to make alive?" But Jesus, the despised Galilean, in all the repose and certainty of conscious glory, turns at once only to say, "I will, be thou clean." The glory of the God of Israel shone out then without distraction, when faith rent the vail. So here—the faith of a Gentile appeals to Him as the Lord of heaven and earth, who had once said in a word, "let there be light, and there was light," and could now just

“say in a word, and his servant should be healed;” and immediately, with the same ease, the divine glory again breaks forth. No disturbance, as though some strange thing were doing; it was only looking through the cloud again, it was only letting the vail drop, that “the life-creating Sun,” the countenance of God Himself, might appear in His power and grace. Anything that belonged to God was nothing too great for Jesus, when faith discovered Him. But save to faith, He veiled Himself, for He came, the emptied Son of God, to atone for sin, and bring us home to Him from whom we had departed in pride. Faith, as it were, entitled Him to know Himself again for a moment, and that must have been a blessed moment to Him. But otherwise, through love to us, He refused to know Himself in this evil and apostate world, saying, “my goodness extendeth not to thee.”

This chapter then introduces the mission of John the Baptist to the Lord, which I believe to be a matter of great interest and meaning.

John had long before this testified to the person of the Son of God. As to that he had no doubt. But it seems that he was not prepared for *all* the results of being the Lord's witness. Like Moses in his day. Moses was the minister of God, and had the conduct of the camp through the wilderness. But he became impatient under the charge, and says, “have I conceived all this people, have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, carry them in thy bosom.” The weakness of his hand to hold the glory betrays itself, and seventy others are made to share it with him. But though he is thus rebuked in the secret place of the

Lord, yet before others his Lord will vindicate him ; so that immediately afterwards, Aaron and Miriam are put to signal reproach for not being afraid to speak against him. (Numb. xi., xii.) Just so here with John the Baptist. John betrays the common weakness, and is offended in Christ. Like Moses he becomes impatient, not being prepared for all the cost and charge of being the Lord's *prisoner* as well as *minister*. He knew Jesus to be the Son of God, as Moses had known Jehovah to be the Redeemer of Israel ; but as the murmurings of the camp had been too much for the one, so the prison and injuries of Herod now prove too much for the other ; and John, like Moses, must listen to the rebuke in secret, "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." But before men also, like Moses, he shall stand graciously approved by his divine Master. "Among them that are born of women, there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

This is the constant way of the Lord. He smote Israel again and again in the secret places of the wilderness, but before their enemies He was as one who had not seen iniquity in them. Many a question was settled between the Lord and the camp when alone, but into the judgment of the ungodly they were not to enter. And so are the saints now under the judgment of the Father, but the future judgment does not await them. In that day they are to have boldness.

In this way John here proves the faithfulness and grace of his blessed Master. And after the Lord has thus vindicated and honoured him before that generation, He turns to give them the character they had earned by their treatment both of John and of Himself. And

what is this, but a telling of us that man is a creature whom God cannot cure? God had now been making full proof of him, addressing him by different ministries, but man had no answer for God. When He mourned to him, man had no tears; when He piped to him, he had no dancing. The human heart was found to be no instrument for the finger of God. All was out of tune when *God* tried it. Intelligence and zeal and action are there at the bidding and awakening of other influences, but nothing was there for *God*. He would have raised a solemn tone by the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking, and then a more joyous one by the social Son of man; but there was no music in the heart of man for God. This was now proved after the trial of the most skilful hands. For all these attempts had been proving the skill of the player, so that wisdom stood "justified of her children." What could have been done more than had been done? "I have piped to you, and ye have not danced; I have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented."

After this solemn word, our Evangelist leads us to another scene; the house of a Pharisee where the Lord had gone, upon invitation, to dine. For our Lord, in this Gospel, is eminently the *social* one; not social, however, as a servant in order to meet objects for His care and tendance, but social as a man in order to converse with men. Therefore we find Him here, as I have already noticed, more frequently than in the other Gospels, seated at meat in the houses of others, be they who they may, for there He could find the mind relaxed, and free to shew itself.

Now this scene in the Pharisee's house is one of

great moral value. It shews us that nothing rightly or really introduces us to Jesus but our sin. Admiration of Him as a teacher, or as a doer of miracles, will never throw us across His path *according to God*. It is only sin and the sense of it that can really introduce us to the Son of God, for He is a Saviour, and sent to us of the blessed God as such. Nicodemus was led to Him as a doer of mighty works ; but Nicodemus must be born again, must get other thoughts of Him, ere he can duly go to Him. So here, this Pharisee. It is clear that it was not as a sinner he knew Him. He had been attracted, amiably attracted too, by something which he had seen or heard in Him, and he prepares Him a feast. But there is another in the house who reaches Him by a different path altogether. She is a sinner of the city, and her sin brings her to Him, and she prepares another feast for Him, and it is at her feast, and not at the Pharisee's, the Lord really seats Himself. Her tears and ointment and kisses are the feast at which the Son of God sits, while all the costlier provision of the host is passed by.

This is very blessed. It is the sinner who really provides the feast and the company for Jesus. Neither the table nor the friends of the Pharisee were quite the thing for Him. It is only the faith that apprehends Him as a Saviour, that can spread a table for the Son of God in this wilderness-world. And I observe in every place where the conversion of Levi the publican is recorded, that we are told immediately afterwards, he prepared meat for the Lord in his own house. For he was one of those whom Jesus came down from the bright heavens to visit. He was a pub-

lican, an owned and published sinner in the world, and Jesus was the Saviour. The faith of such therefore opened the door and entertained Him, made Him welcome in His own proper character, while everything else only kept Him outside still.

It is our joy to know this and believe it. And when we begin as sinners with a Saviour, our journey is wonderful and glorious beyond all thought, for our sin leads us to Christ, and then Christ leads us to the Father. And what a path that is! It stretches all along from the darkest and most distant places of creation, where sin and death reign, up to the highest heavens, where love and glory dwell and shine for ever. Angels have their own untainted sphere to move in, but they have never trod such a path as this. The Church passes from a sinner's darkness into God's marvellous light, and there has been nothing like that, and none but a sinner, conscious of the value of the Son of God, can understand it. And I see from this striking scene, that this character of a sinner saved by the grace of the Son of God is remembered to the very end. This woman loved much, but her love did not serve her as a sinner at all, for at the end the Lord says to her, "thy *faith* (not thy *love*) hath saved thee, go in peace." This is much to be observed by us all, for it is very comforting. The fruit of our love may be honoured before others, as here this poor woman's tears and ointment are owned before the Pharisee. A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward, if given for love to Christ. But before the conscience of the sinner nothing is owned, but the blood and the faith that rests in it. It is faith and not love that sends us on

our way with the Eunuch rejoicing, or bids us, with this poor woman, to go in peace. And sweet it is thus to be cast on Jesus, and on Him only. Let the soul be as elevated, the walk as bright and unspotted, and the love as glowing, as they may be, let the experience be as rich and various as David's or Paul's, yet Jesus, Jesus, is the only Saviour. Jesus first sends away in peace, and the *first* confidence and joy are to be kept steadfast to *the end*.

I cannot, however, close this part of our Gospel or quit this house of the Pharisee, fruitful spot as it is, without another look at it. For it seems to me to have been a place where the great conflict which has been often fought, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, or between the two wives, the bondwoman and the free, was again witnessed.

By transgression, such as Adam's, the creature assumed strength independent of God ; and, therefore, in restoring him, God must teach him that He alone is sovereign, and that all creature strength must fail. And this is the lesson which the law and the Gospel together teach : for the law, testing man, shews the vanity of confidence in flesh ; the Gospel, revealing God, shews the safety of trust in Him. And the mystery of the two wives teaches the same. Hagar had strength in the flesh, but her seed was not the heir. Leah had strength and title in the flesh, but her son did not excel, but lost the birthright. Peninnah had strength in the flesh, but no child of her's delivered Israel out of their misery and oppression. On the other hand, all blessing and honour lay with the children of promise. Isaac caused laughter, and was he

in whom Abraham's house was established. Joseph got the birthright, and as soon as he was born, Jacob spoke of returning to his inheritance, for "if children, then heirs." Samuel filled the mother's heart and lips with a song, and was nourished up till he lifted Israel from the dust, regained the glory out of the hand of the enemy, and raised the stone of help in the midst of the camp. And all these things teach us, as the law and the Gospel teach us, that "by strength shall no man prevail." The rich are sent empty away, the bows of the mighty are broken, but the poor handmaid is remembered, and she that was barren bears seven.

This is the lesson which God is teaching us ; the necessary lesson in a world like our's, where the creature has departed from God in pride, in the assumption of strength, affecting to be God. The Lord God is ever therefore saying, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."

This is the conflict in this world of our's ; and that which is of flesh or of man has ever struggled with that which is of God or of the Spirit, and this struggle we have had exhibited from very old time, and have it still. The house of the two wives, to which I have referred, constantly presented it. That of Abraham witnessed it. There Hagar and Sarah for a season dwelt together, but in discord and strife. The family of Jacob presented the same. Leah had the right of the flesh or of the first-born, but Rachel was the object of election and delight ; and they two, the wives of the same husband, dwelt together but could not agree together. Elkanah's house was the same. Peninnah and Hannah were the Hagar and

Sarah, the Leah and Rachel, again—pride and provocations from the one, and constant sorrow of heart from the other. And all these scenes were the expressions of the way in which the flesh persecutes the Spirit. Of the same struggle the Church in Galatia was another scene. And the heart of each believer is, in measure, the same. And nothing heals the house, the Church, or the heart, but strengthening the free-woman, giving fruitfulness to the seed of God, the spirit of adoption, the principle of child-like holy liberty in us and among us. Bring forth Isaac, and send away Ishmael, and dwell in an undivided house. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Now the Lord found Israel very much the same scene. That which was born after the flesh persecuted that which was born after the Spirit. The poor barren woman was found there again, the tainted sinner or the publican, weak and lost in themselves, receiving the gracious visitation of the God of all power and love, but suffering the scorn and persecution of those who had strength in themselves, as they judged, the Pharisees, the Hagers and Peninnahs of that day. This was all, in principle, the flesh and the Spirit again, the bondwoman and the free; and this house which we have now been visiting was a sample of this.

May our faith be strengthened to do justice to God's love! That love claims our full and happy confidence. To render it only a diffident and suspicious trust is to treat it unworthily. May all such spirit of fear and of bondage be gone! May the true Sarah in our

hearts cry out, and cry till it prevail, "cast out the bondwoman and her son." For when the Lord does His work, He does it in a way worthy of Himself. When Israel came out of Egypt, they came out, not as though they were ashamed of themselves, but *harnessed* and *full-handed*. They came out, as the host of God should. Not a dog dared to move his tongue at them, nor was there one feeble person among their tribes. And so with us sinners going forth from under the power of darkness with our Redeemer. We are not to go forth with fear and suspicion, as though we could hardly trust the arm that was saving us; but in such a way as will declare plainly, that the work is the work of Him, "whose love is as great as His power, and neither knows measure nor end." We are to leave the Pharisee's house behind us, like this poor sinner, not minding what the company there say, but bearing the sweet echo of the Lord's voice, which tells us of peace, still upon our heart and ear. Then we shall go forth, like Israel from Egypt, as the redeemed of the Lord ought to go, letting hell and earth know, in our joyous and perfect assurance of His salvation, that He who is higher than the highest is on our side, and that we are feeding upon "the Mighty's meat."

VIII.—Entering on this chapter, I would observe that in the case of the poor sinner, which closes the preceding one, we see *deep personal affection* as the fruit of conscious forgiveness or healing; here, in this company of women, *devoted attachment and service*.

In the poor sinner, all the hidden fountains are opened at the bidding of the grace of Christ. She knew that He had accepted her, sinner as she was, and this commanded her heart. It left her without an eye for the Pharisee's feast or an ear for his scorning, for Jesus had drawn her apart from everything, and to come near Him, as near as love and gratitude and worship could bring her, was all her concern. And at the same bidding of His healing love, this company of women attach themselves to Him. They follow to serve Him. Grateful love told itself out in her more silently ; but in them it was busy. It would be with Him wherever He was, that it might give Him whatever it could minister.

Various fruit, but each blessed. And Jesus can understand both, and receive the secret tears of the one, and the active services of the other.

The beauty of either case would be sadly soiled, if these were not the fruits of *conscious* forgiveness or healing. What affection, what service, so pure as that which comes from thence ? The Publican may smite on his breast in *conscious guilt*, and that in its place is surely a right and godly affection. But how is the beauty and the attractiveness of it lost beside the tears and services, the love and the devotedness, that spring and flow forth from *conscious acceptance* ! Nothing so precious to God, nothing so lovely even in our own thoughts, when we consider it for a moment. And on the other hand, how sad when this conscious forgiveness is not thus attended—when, instead of tears and services, self-satisfaction, high-mindedness, slight and contempt of others, or the mere unspiritual pursuit

of knowledge, and the busy competition of party, mark the heart and the ways. May we all, beloved, cherish these simple patterns which the Spirit here records, and which so meet the approving presence of the Lord !

This is the first of a series of chapters, in which we see *the Lord*, *the twelve*, and *the seventy*, in succession going forth to minister (see viii. 1, ix. 1, x. 1) ; and this extended exhibition of ministry is all according to the grace of the Spirit in this Gospel. And as a further expression of the same grace, our Evangelist tells us, that the Lord went "throughout every city and village"—no spot was unvisited by His light and goodness. And this divine minister of grace is attended by a suitable train. A company who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and cleansed of devils, follow Him now to witness His *grace* ; as, by and bye, when He comes forth in power, He will have behind Him an equally suited train of shining ones to reflect His *glory* (Rev. xix. 14).

Our Evangelist then records the parable of the sower, given to us also, we know, by both Matthew and Mark. No doubt it has the same general character and purpose in each Gospel ; but I observe that the Lord here is not so careful, by directly quoting the prophet Isaiah, to apply the judgment of God to *Israel*, as He is in the other Evangelists—and this is still according to His mind in St. Luke.

In the progress of this chapter, we get the case of the Gadarenes, of the Woman with the issue of blood, and of Jairus' daughter, combined in the same way as in St. Mark.

On these, and similar acts of power and goodness, we may, generally, observe, that the Lord's ministry always bears these two characteristics upon it—*He was ever judging the devil, but never the sinner.* He went on, blotting out the traces of the destructive power of the one, but leaving the traces of His own redeeming power on the other. By the very same stroke He did these two things. Every blind man made to see, every lame one made to walk, alike witnessed the judgment of the power of the enemy, and the blessing of the sinner. When He cleansed the leper, when He raised the dead, this twofold testimony was given. And so the devil meets Him only to tremble, and the believing sinner only to take away a blessing, and to take it always with a welcome. Let the Lord be doing what He may, or going where He may, did He ever allow the needy child of man to feel himself an intruder? Even His upbraidings cannot be called upbraidings. For what were they?—they were only for want of confidence in Him—because the poor sinner did not come with sufficient boldness. He never upbraided him for being too confident, but for not being confident enough. His language was after this manner,—“why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”

This was not upbraiding. This was not repelling the sinner, but resenting his lingerings and suspicions. Nothing can be surer, in the ways of the Son of God on earth, than these things, that He was ever judging the devil, but never the sinner. It was like Moses, who would go forth and smite an *Egyptian*; but if he himself were refused and insulted by an *Israelite*, he would go into exile, go where he might, unfriended

and alone, rather than touch a hair of his head. (Ex. ii.) Or like Samson, another distinguished and honoured type, who will seek occasion against *the Philistines*, and even join affinity with them, just to plague and impoverish them, but will be as weak as a child, if *the men of Judah* resist him (Judg. xv. 12). Moses and Samson had strength enough against the enemy, but none against their own people; as the Son of God will judge the devil and all his works, but say of sinners, "I came not to judge—not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

So was it now. Gadara was a portion of the Jewish or sanctified earth. It was within that land on which the eyes of the God of heaven and earth would fain have rested from one end of the year to the other. (Deut. xi.) But the unclean had long since entered that land and defiled it, and there we find them at this time in herds, as also the full display of the enemy's unbridled strength. Legion and the swine were in Gadara, to tell us what the place of Jehovah's choice had now become. It was the very palace of the strong man, but the Son of God now enters, as the stronger, to do His proper work, to shew Himself the Redeemer of the captive, and the destruction of the power of death.

But the feeders of the unclean swine in that place are not prepared for this. It was a trespass on them, and they would have Jesus depart from their coasts. Terrible indeed this is. Nothing that we see in all the history of the Gospel gives us such an expression of the dark and unclean region of Satan as this. With such a display of the grace and power of the Stronger

man in the midst of them, still they desire Him not, but would sell all their interest in the Son of God for a herd of swine. This was very awful ; and Jesus has but to leave them, and to return across the lake of Galilee, to pursue His way in other scenes.

A Jewish ruler seeks Him, that He would come to his house, in behalf of his little only daughter, who there lay a dying. He goes onward with the purpose of proving Himself, in the house of the Jew, the resurrection and the life ; but His path thither is interrupted by the faith of a needy stranger who touches Him in the crowd. She had a plague in her body. It was a kind of fretting leprosy, a fountain of uncleanness in her very flesh, which no skill of man could heal. In her extremity she hears of Jesus, and by a single touch, gets all that she needed. But no one knew her, or cared to know her. Both herself and her touching the Lord would have remained a secret in the busy crowd, only He who heals her knows her, and owns her before them all. The multitude was thronging and pressing Him, but it was not need or sin that urged them, and therefore He feels it not. But her fainter touch was felt, because it was the touch of a consciously needy and defiled one who had learnt to believe that there was virtue in Him. Her sorrow introduces her to Him, and He knows her because he healed her. This was the ground and the character of their acquaintance ; *and the Son of God and the healed sinner thus meet together to be alone in the crowd*—she a stranger to all but Him, and He treating as strangers all but her.

This is full of the truest and most solid consolation

for our souls. But beside that, this path of the Lord is also full of meaning. It tells us what we know the path and action of the Son of God is to be. For He has before Him, in the distance, the day of His power in Israel, the house of the Jew, where He will make the dry bones live, and call His people from their dark and long sleep, as prisoners from the pit ; but on His journey there, or during the present season, by the way, a stranger engages His sympathies, a poor unnoticed one (save by Himself), whom conscious necessity had thrown in His way, like the church of God, which alone occupies the Son of God, while on His way to display His power in resurrection and life in Israel in the latter day.

I judge this to be the character of what we get here. And thus, this chapter (which opens with the Lord going forth to His ministry) gives us these samples of the varied fruit of his toil both in the church and in Israel ; shewing us also, as in Gadara, what a world it was into which He came to toil, that all His blessed travail might close in His own praise both in heaven and earth, the world's conviction and judgment, and the comfort of every poor sinner who will but trust in Him.

IX.—In the opening of this chapter, we get, in order, the mission of the Twelve. But the Lord does not here, as in Matthew, limit their labours to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” this distinction being still according to the general character of the two Gospels.

The exercise of Herod's conscience is then noticed, and perhaps a little more largely than in either Matthew or Mark, and is again referred to in chap. xxiii. This is still according to our Evangelist. But the martyrdom of the Baptist, on the other hand, is not so fully detailed, for that was a fact in the course and history of the Jewish apostacy, and lay, therefore, less within notice of the Spirit in him.

The Transfiguration our Evangelist then gives us, and more particularly, too, than either Matthew or Mark.

The full proof of Israel's unbelief had now been made.* Israel had refused to receive their own. They had not discovered in Jesus of Nazareth the light that was to lighten the world and to be their glory. The earth, for the present, was therefore lost to Jesus. For Zion, by ancient decree (Ps. ii.), is the seat of divine dominion in the earth. A cross, as the Lord here forbodes, and not a crown, awaits Him therefore.

But if the earth be closed upon Him, the heavens must and will open to Him, and to His saints now, in the day of His refusal here, gathering around Him by faith. And the purpose of this vision on the holy mount, is to give His saints a pledge of that glory in the heavens which is their inheritance.

Here, then, as for the first time, the heavenly Bridegroom and Bride appear in each other's presence.

There was no moment like this. This was the hour of passing from earth to heaven. The secret of God, in vision, was here disclosed. The heavenly Jerusalem stood, for a moment, with her opened gates, before

* This proof is laid out more fully and orderly in Matthew's Gospel than in either of the others.

those favoured disciples, Peter, James, and John. Moses and Elias appear in glory with Jesus—fellow-heirs and of the same body, but Peter, James, and John beheld it. There were, in this manner, both *companions* and *witnesses* of the glory. As in the great original or antitype, the coming millennial kingdom, the Bride of the Lamb, or the body of the glorified children of the resurrection, will descend, as this glory now rests on the hill, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it. (Rev. xxi.)

Such I deem to be the great purpose of this vision, which we call “the Transfiguration.” There is an intimation in ver. 37, that it was witnessed at night. A circumstance of much meaning, I believe. For as this was the place of the heavenly glory, and as that place will need neither sun nor moon, but the glory of God will lighten it, so this mount is now lighted up as by the body of the glorified Lord.*

Again, I observe that these heavenly and glorified strangers talk with Jesus about His decease. Fit theme for such a moment. For that decease is to be had in everlasting remembrance. The glory will celebrate it. (Rev. v.) The whole order of heaven, the redeemed, the angels, and all creation, will own it, as we see in that place of the Revelation. For *the glory* owes itself to *the cross*—as the trumpet which ushered in the Jubilee was heard only on the day of Atonement; the time of restitution and refreshing, in this manner, owning its dependance on the smitten Lamb of God (Lev. xxv.), or, on “the decease” of Jesus.

* So, “the Holiest” in the Temple, another type of the heavenly place, had no light but from the glory.

And further; I find that this journey up the hill (taken as it was, under promise that it should lead to the kingdom, ver. 27), was a little too much for the disciples. The Lord is in prayer till the glory appears, but they are heavy with sleep. This, too, has meaning. Nature was betraying its weakness—the flesh was burdensome, and could not travel such a road. It was an up-hill journey to poor man. The wise virgins slumber. All this is so. But still—when Peter and his comrades awake, “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” is his word—this telling us that his heart and desire were really in the right place, though flesh was weak; as the wise virgins, though they slumber, have oil in their vessels to recruit their lamps, when the Bridegroom comes—that oil, like this word of poor loving Peter, telling us that in the real longing of their hearts, they waited for Jesus.

This is another point of interest and of comfort. And at the end, in full harmony with the great leading purpose of this vision, and of which I have spoken, “the excellent glory” appears (2 Pet. i. 17). The cloud comes to take the heavenly family home. The Lord and His companions enter it, while Peter, James, and John stand without.

This is all in harmony, but it is all wonderful. Within this cloud, as we here see, the glory was seated again—as of old, when it traversed the desert. It now acted as the vail separating the holy from the holiest; and it is the peculiar honour of the Church, the changed and risen saints, alike transfigured or glorified, to have their place in it, while Israel and the honour of the nations only walk in the light of it.

And, thus, this part of the vision being somewhat beyond the present thoughts of the disciples, they fear, as Jesus with Moses and Elias are enfolded in that cloud. For the heavenly places, or the top of the mystic ladder, up to which this cloud was now separating these glorious strangers, had not as yet been disclosed to Jewish faith. Jacob had been at the foot of it, and Jacob's people knew the God of Bethel, and lived in the hope of the promise touching the inheritance of the land. But neither Jacob nor they knew of anything at the top of the ladder, save the voice of Jehovah who addressed him. The Transfiguration now discloses the secrets of that glorious place, and shews a family of shining heavenly ones there with Jehovah-Jesus. This was the mystery, a secret even to prophets and righteous men of old, that the God of their fathers was to have a family in the place out of which the blessing was to flow, and the glory was to shine, as well as a restored people and a subject creation at the foot, to enjoy the blessing, and to dwell in the light of the glory.

Thus this vision was an advance, filling out the revelation of "the purpose of his will," that God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth (Eph. i. 10). Indeed so glorious a vision as this had never been enjoyed. Abram's passing lamp was glorious, and the ladder of Jacob was glorious. The sight of the burning bush was full of blessing. The sight of the God of Israel by Moses and the Elders at Horeb, was glorious, and also that of the armed captain under the walls of Jericho. Angels were welcome visitors from heaven to

patriarchs and rulers of old, and the passage of the Lord Himself before the Mediator (Ex. xxxiii.), and the prophet (1 Kings xix.), at the mount of God, were both perfect in their season. But this vision of the Church on the top of the hill is beyond them all. That which, perhaps, the most nearly approaches it, is the rapture of Elijah in the presence of Elisha, for that was *the conducting* of the glorified ones up to the place where *they are now seen*. But this therefore surpasses it, giving us to see the heavenly family, not merely on their way to glory, but peacefully at home in it; no terror making them afraid, no surprise as from light that was beyond them, like Isaiah, Daniel, and others; but all is the consciousness of being at home, though in the very midst of the brightness of it all.

Excellent, however, as this was, it was destined to yield to something more glorious still. The 7th of Acts becomes Stephen's mount of Transfiguration after this. And then the martyr himself is stamped with the heavenly glory. He shines with the light of the children of the resurrection, who are to be as the angels. It is not that, like the disciples here, he sees that light reflected in others, but he bears it immediately himself. Nor is it that the glory is let down on the mount that he might see it here, but the heaven itself is opened and he sees it there, and one waiting to receive him into it. His eyes behold Him for himself, and not for another. And his word before the council is a comment on all this, shewing a line of strangers and sufferers (among whom he there takes his place), led by "the God of glory" up to "the glory of God" (Acts vii. 2—55).

Whether, however, there with Stephen, or here to Peter, James, and John, heavenly secrets are disclosed, and the Church is shewn to be at the top of the ladder, in the glory of the Son Himself. There is the celestial, as well as the terrestrial. The heavens declare the glory of God. Heaven and earth are both to have in them the witness of redemption. Redemption is too excellent a work to remain uncelebrated either here or there. It is a work that has called forth the full flow of the divine love, and power, and must be known, therefore, in heaven and on earth. The Church is appointed to tell of it there, and Israel with her attendant nations to speak of it here; and this heavenly witness of it, the Church, is here, for a passing moment, seen in her place on the top of the hill. But what a grace and calling that is! The very conception of it is divine. None but God could have conceived such a purpose, nothing less than infinite love could have formed the thought of a family drawn from among sinners, to be loved with the love, and glorified with the glory, of the Son, to dwell in one house, and sit on one throne with him. But O how little do our wretched hearts value either Him or His glory! What is it all to us, is the dark whisper of our souls.—May the Spirit within silence this unbelief of nature, and cause us more clearly to hear His own testimony to Jesus!

After the vision had passed, and they were descending the hill, the Lord, in the other Gospels, talks to them of the ministry of Elias. But that is unnoticed here, for being Jewish ministry it was less suited to the Spirit in St. Luke. Beyond this there is nothing characteristic in this chapter, till we reach the close (ver. 51—62).

At this place, what has been suggested (p. 9) as the fourth part of our Gospel begins. The Lord, having ended His more formal ministry in Galilee, begins His journey to Jerusalem.

Our Evangelist is the only one who notices the circumstances with which this journey opens. And there is something of his *moral* arrangement of incidents to be noticed here. As has been observed by another, commenting on this part of St. Luke,—“this passage of history seems to come in here for the sake of its *affinity* with the text before (the Lord’s rebuke of John for forbidding the man who followed not with them); for there, under colour of zeal for Christ, the disciples were for silencing and restraining separatists, here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death; but as for *that*, so also for *this*, Christ reprimanded them.”

The moral order in our Evangelist’s narrative is, I believe, thus exhibited in this place of His Gospel. But it introduces a very peculiar path of the Lord.

The recent vision on the mount may have led to it, but whether that be so or not, we find our Lord here addressing Himself to his journey, in the consciousness of its leading Him to glory. The time had come, we read, when He was “to be received up,”—words which express His ascension to glory. And He seems to act according to this consciousness, sending messengers before His face, as though it were to prepare for Him a way suited to this anticipated glory. The chariot of God would be in readiness to attend Him from Jerusalem upwards (xxiv. 51), but it was now for the children of men to prepare His previous way from the place where He then

was to that city. And He was thus, as it were, trying whether the world would own His claim to be "received up," as afterward He tried whether Israel would own His royal place in Zion (chap. xix. 28). But neither would the world know Him, or Israel receive Him. The world was not ready for His claims, as is here expressed by the conduct of the Samaritan villagers. The earth did not care for His heavenly glory. "Go up thou bald head, go up thou bald head," an infidel world was again, in the spirit of it, saying.

The disciples, who had, it may be, caught the tone of their Lord's mind on this striking occasion, look on him as another Elijah travelling on to meet the chariot of Israel, and they move him to do what Elijah had done, by resenting this indignity of the Samaritan villagers, as of the captains and their fifties. But the way of the Son of man, for the present, must be different. He will pass to glory rather through sorrow of His own than through judgment of the world. He "will suffer thus far;" and therefore He here restrains this motion of His disciples, bows His head to this scorn of men by seeking another village, and that, too, not with preparation before His face, but as the rejected Christ of God.

In such a character He accordingly resumes His journey. No sense of glory fills His soul, as it had done when He set out. The Samaritans had changed its current, and He goes on, consciously despised and rejected of men, who had now in full deliberation hid their faces, and shut their doors upon Him.—And if, beloved, it be to the praise of grace in St. Paul, that he had learnt how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and how to be hungry, do we not see all

this to perfection in our blessed Master? He knew how one moment to act in the full sense of His fulness or glory, and the next to become the despised Son of man. He takes the place which the scornful villagers of Samaria give Him without an effort or a murmur. Perfect Master, as well as gracious Deliverer!

And in this place of rejection we see certain ones brought into intercourse with Him, that we through them may have some good lessons read to our souls. Two of them are introduced in Matthew (chap. viii.), but not in the same moral connection, as here.

The Lord speaks on each case in the full sense of His present place of rejection in the earth. The whole bearing of the instruction proceeds from that. It is the Lord's rejection that has given His saints a *new* place, *new* duties, and *new* attachments; and these are here brought out for our contemplation, that we may count the cost of being His. Nothing brings the saints into these new things, but the total rejection of their Lord by the world; but let the Lord be apprehended in His rejection, and then these things will be entered into by the soul at once. No "looking back," no knowing of man "after the flesh," by those who have gone forth to the Son of God without the camp; and it is only when we, in spirit, stand there with Him, that we now understand Him rightly.

These holy and solemn lessons are read to our souls by our divine Teacher from His present place—"despised and rejected of men." He would still teach us, even through His own sorrows, that we might be kept

in company with Himself and His thoughts, as we pass on from scene to scene across this evil world.*

X.—This chapter gives us, in order, the mission of the Seventy. But it is only here that we get this; for the Lord, as I have already observed, in this Gospel looks out to man beyond the Jewish boundary; and thus we are given to see a ministry more extended in its character than that which properly suited itself to Jewish arrangements. It intimated a departure from strict primitive order in Israel, as did a similar appointment of seventy elders in the days of Moses. (Numb. xi.) But this is all according to St. Luke.

This mission is sent forth with a message of peace from God to every house and every city; but, withal, no man was to be saluted by the way. This has great value in it. Jesus proposes, beloved, to settle not the mere intercourses of men in their social order, but the connection between God and sinners. That is the great circumstance, and which the Lord must first provide for. So with our Apostle afterwards. With Paul it mattered little whether the saints were bond or free; for if bond, they were still the Lord's freemen, if free, they were still the Lord's servants. Their relation to the Lord was the great thing (1 Cor. vii.); as here we see it was also in the judgment of the Son of God.

* In answering the third of these persons, our Lord seems to refer to the call of Elisha, to which the recent mention of Elijah by His disciples may naturally have turned His mind. His little analogy and instruction taken from a ploughman seems to have been suggested by Elisha's history (See 1 Kings xix. 21).

There was to be no saluting of any man, while there was to be the publishing of peace to every house and every city. It was not the courtesies of human life the Lord's messengers were to bear on their lips, but a happy, holy and weighty message from God to sinners.

This was the mind of the blessed Lord on now sending out His messengers ; and on their return with a report of their labours, He anticipates the fall of Satan. A little sample of power in the hands of the Seventy hints this result to Him. But after expressing it, He turns to check in His disciples the looking chiefly at *power*, telling them that there was something for them richer than that, even *a name in heaven*, a memorial with a Father there ; and however excellent authority over devils might be, or power in the earth, yet that memorial was happier still. It is not that He undervalues power, or withdraws it from them. Nay, He rather rejoices in it, and confirms it in their hands, saying, "I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions." But the home in heaven of the children is to be still more precious than the power in earth of the heirs, of God.

And it has interested me much to observe, that it is just here (and in the corresponding place in Matt. xi.), that the mind of the Lord in those Gospels approaches the most nearly to what it afterwards is in St. John. In St. John, the Lord is in connection with the Father and the heavenly family, and it is just in this place of our Gospel, that He looks out to those objects beyond all that was then surrounding Him in the apostate cities of Israel. It is as though our Evangelist had

just laid hold on the skirts of St. John; or rather, as though this mantle of our Prophet, that energy of the Spirit which clothes him here, were taken up by that other Prophet to do by it greater wonders, and bring out richer revelations still. The Father, the Son, the headship of all things in Himself, and the family who have their names written in heaven (the Church, Heb. xii. 23), these are the objects which are here present to the thoughts of the Lord, as He looks onward to what none saw but Himself, through the unbelief of the Jewish cities, and this little sample of power in the hands of the Seventy. And, in spirit, He rejoices in all this, and takes afresh His complacency in the person and the purpose of the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, and also in His own place in the blessed mystery; turning, too, in all personal intimacy towards His disciples, as meaning to identify them with this blessedness which passes before His mind, and which prophets and kings of old had not attained.

We have, however, a painful instance of the way in which the Lord was liable to be intruded on in this low-thoughted world. He was, at this moment, as we have seen, happy in thoughts of heavenly things, when a lawyer proposes an inquiry which came from other sources and springs altogether. But He bows His head to the intrusion, and comes down to man's level. And in many other places, as here, we may notice the ease and patience with which He ever turned Himself towards man. I have already noticed the way in which He occasionally comes forth in divine glory at the bidding of faith (page 40), but His ease as a teacher or a healer coming forth at the call of man's ignorance

or need, is equally lovely in its place. Nothing was too glorious in God for Jesus to assume, when faith unvailed Him, and nothing too little in man for Him to wait on, when necessity or ignorance appealed to Him. And in all this He was never in haste, as though He felt He was meeting a difficulty, but always turns in the graceful as well as gracious ease of conscious power, telling the occasion, let it be what it may, that He was equal to it.

But this only by the way, if haply the Spirit would give us some delight in marking the ways of Jesus.

This inquiry of the lawyer leads the Lord to the parable of the good Samaritan, which is peculiar to our Evangelist. The purpose of it was, to shew this lawyer who his neighbour was: but in the usual way of the Lord, this instruction is conveyed in a body of larger doctrine; so that we get not only an answer to the inquiry, but other principles of truth. I see the same in the character of the Apostle's teaching afterwards. And this is always the way of power and the way of God. God, in His dispensations, has done this. He does not merely restore what we had lost, but He brings in other glories and blessings which also carry with them the full restoration. And God, in His instructions, has done this. The Spirit of revelation not only answers the anxiety of an inquirer, but conveys that answer through truths and principles which unfold wider thoughts still. As here; the law of neighbourly love is taught and illustrated by a beautiful exhibition of the grace of the Gospel of the Son of God, brought in upon the complete inadequacy of everything else to answer the need of sinners.

The case which the Lord suggests in this parable was a defiling of the land; and all that the law could do in it, was to find out the wrong doer, and exact eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Nor could the ministers of the altar under the law provide for the case. They had their service elsewhere. But a stranger, in the liberty of his own love, may attend to it, if he please. And so with us sinners. God must come forth in the activities of His own love to meet our sad condition, for it lies beyond all other help. The services of a temple will not do for those who have no cleanness fit for a temple. Man is not there by nature, his heart is no sanctuary for God, but he lies in an unclean place, defiled in his blood, and what he wants is to be sought out and brought home. Man has been made the prey of a strong and a cruel enemy, and it is that love which will go, and, at a great cost, bind him up, that he needs. And such an one has met him in the Son of God in the Gospel. Under the law, God was in the holy place, and the unclean must be removed, and the priest and the Levite attend that sanctuary. But in the Gospel, God is in the unclean place, seeking the ruined ones, Jesus is going about doing good, the Stranger from heaven has come where man lay in his blood, and has looked on him and had compassion, has gone and meddled with all that pollution, untouched by it, washed the wounded sinner from his blood, and anointed him with oil. (Ezek. xvi.) All this He has done, and changed places with the wounded sinner also. For though rich, He has become poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich—though without sin He was made sin, that we

might be made the righteousness of God in Him—as the good Samaritan changes place with the wounded traveller, getting down from his own beast and setting him on it. And He has done more than this; for He has told us, that He has His eye upon us for ever, that whether present or absent He thinks of us, as the Stranger charges the host to take care of the poor helpless man, and that when he comes that way again, as surely he will, he will repay him.

All this love, this costly and needed love, we have in the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, the true good Samaritan. He kept the law of love to his neighbour, but only He; and we must go to learn the way from Him, “do likewise,” kindle our heart at His heart, if in anywise we hope to answer that end of the law. This lawyer was making his boast in the law, but he had evidently reduced and qualified it, as every one must, who seeks, like him, to be justified by it. “Who is my neighbour?” said he; little judging that he was about to hear such a tale of love to one’s neighbour as was coming forth. The law was too high, too noble for this man’s thoughts. And so is it for us all. We see nothing worthy of that word, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,” till we trace the well-spent life of Jesus. He would have stood on the law, and refused Jesus, but he has to learn, if his ears could hear it, that Jesus alone upheld the law, or gave it efficacy on the minds and consciences of others.

It is our salvation to know Jesus as the Stranger that met us in our wounds with His oil and wine. Our Evangelist alone gives us this parable, but this is

quite according to the largeness of the spirit of grace which fills his Gospel throughout.

The little scene which then closes this chapter is also peculiar to Luke, serving his general purpose of instructing us in great principles of truth. The two sisters, here introduced, were differently minded; and, being brought to the trial of the mind of Christ, we get the judgment of God on matter of much value to us.

The house, which we now enter, was Martha's. The Spirit of God tells us this, as being characteristic of Martha; and into her house, with all readiness of heart, she receives the Lord, and prepares for Him the very best provision it had. His labours and fatigue called for this. Martha well knew that His ways abroad were the ways of the good Samaritan, who would go on foot that others might ride, and she loves Him too well not to observe and provide for His weariness. But Mary has no house for Him. She was, in spirit, a stranger like Himself; but she opens a sanctuary for Him, and seats Him there, the Lord of her humble temple. She takes her place at His feet, and hears His words. She knows, as well as Martha, that He was wearied, but she knows also that there was a fulness in Him that could afford to be more wearied still. Her ear and her heart therefore still use Him, instead of her hand or her foot ministering to Him. And in these things lay the difference between the sisters. Martha's eye saw His weariness, and would give to Him; Mary's faith apprehended His fulness underneath His weariness, and would draw from Him.

This brings out the mind of the Son of God. The

Lord accepts the care of Martha, as long as it is simple care and diligence about His present need ; but the moment she brings her mind into competition with Mary's, she learns His judgment, and is taught to know, that Mary, by her faith, was refreshing Him with a sweeter feast than all her care and the provision of her house could possibly have supplied. Mary's faith gave Jesus a sense of His own divine glory. It told Him that though He was the wearied one, he could still feed and refresh her. She was at His feet, hearing His words. There was no temple there, or light of the sun, but the Son of God was there, and He was everything to her. This was the honour He prized, and blessedly, indeed, was she in His secret. When He was thirsty and tired at Jacob's well, He forgot it all in giving out other waters, which no pitcher could have held, or well beside His own supplied ; and here Mary brings her soul to the same well, knowing that, in spite of all His weariness, it was as full as ever for her use.

And O, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us ! Our God is asserting for Himself the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fulness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render Him. Entitled, as He is, to more than all creation could give Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love, and draw from His treasures. The honour which *our confidence* puts upon Him is His highest honour, for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from unexhausted fulness. Under the law He had to receive from us, but in the Gospel He is giving to us ;

and the words of the Lord Jesus are these—"it is more blessed to give than to receive." And this place He will fill for ever ; for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from every thing that hath breath, but forth from Himself, and from the seat of His glory, shall go the constant flow of blessing, the light to cheer, the waters to refresh, and the leaves of the tree to heal, and our God shall taste His own joy, and display His own glory, in being a giver for ever.

XI. 1—13.—It is the Lord's way in this Gospel, as I have already noticed, to bring His mind into contact with all the exercises of the hearts and consciences of men, that we may get the judgment of God (for that He ever carried in Him) on ourselves. These verses illustrate this. And the subject is *prayer*, one of deep interest to our souls. May the Lord guide the counsels of our hearts upon it !

The law, generally, did not require prayer, for the law was testing man, and calling on him to use his strength, if he had any; while prayer, on the other hand, comes forth, on the sense of our weakness and dependance. I remember, however, two forms of prayer provided by the law ; but one is on the ground of innocency, the other on that of obedience, and thus both were suited to the dispensation with which they were associated. (Deut. xxi., xxvi.) John's ministry advanced beyond the law, convicting flesh of being but grass ; and as we learn here, that he had taught his

disciples to pray, we cannot doubt but that, like the law, he provided an utterance for their hearts, suited to the standing up to which his ministry was leading them. So in the same wisdom here with the Lord. He provides a prayer for them suited to the condition of faith and hope to which He had conducted them. And all this is perfect because seasonable, because suited to them who had just said, "Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

But it would not have been thus perfect or seasonable, had it been an utterance altogether according to the increased light into which the Church has been since brought. The Lord had not then entered, as the High Priest of our profession, into His heavenly sanctuary, nor was the Holy Ghost then given. Thus, His own name is not pleaded here; as the Lord Himself says after this, "hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." But shortly after saying that, He adds, "in that day ye shall ask in my name"—thus plainly telling us that there would be an advance in the character of the worship of the saints. And so indeed we find it. The prayers, which the Apostles, through the Spirit, make for the saints, entertain higher thoughts and deeper desires than what this prayer (perfect, doubtless, in its place) of our Lord expresses. (See Eph. i., iii., Col. i., &c. &c.)

And from all this, I do indeed judge that we may easily admit the perfectness, *because of the seasonableness*, of this holy form of prayer, and discern spiritually that the Lord was not providing it as the abiding utterance of the Church. I do not at all say that the soul may not still use it, and find its desire at times expressed

by it. But I believe the soul, fully aware of its new place, under the Holy Ghost, with Jesus ascended on high, is doing no despite to the Lord's holy furniture of His own sanctuary, if it do not use it. He is the Lord of the temple still, it is most true, and it is surely our joy to own Him thus; but the Holy Ghost He has now given to be the living power there, and He fills it with true and spiritual worship, with groanings which cannot be uttered, with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, with the spirit of adoption which ever cries "Abba, Father." For the same Lord of the temple has now ordained it thus, and it is obedience to walk onward with Him. What was once the beauty of His house is now "beggarly elements," because the Lord has gone onward, leaving Jerusalem and its worship behind; and it does not become us to look back on the goodly stones with admiration, if Jesus have gone forth to the Mount of Olives.

But these things, beloved, I rather suggest in connection with this scripture. He Himself further shews us here, in the parable of the friend asking for the loaves at midnight, the *value or success* of prayer; and then, in His contrast between the human and heavenly Father, the *warrant or securities* of prayer. And these securities are two-fold,—one drawn from the *love of the relationship*, the other from the *positive goodness* of God Himself, that we may have strong assurance of heart, when we seek the Lord and His blessing.

I cannot, however, pass on from this, without asking, does not the little expression "from within" carry much moral value with it? I think it does. It seems to tell

us that being "within" has a necessary tendency to indispose us to enter into those sympathies, into which we should at all times allow ourselves to be called. Moses, it is true, though in the midst of Egypt, went out to look on the burthens of his brethren; and Nehemiah, though in the Persian palace, wept over the desolations of the city of his father's sepulchres. They were both "within," but faith thrust them out. Their circumstances made this trial of faith the severer, and its victory more excellent and unusual. For it is dangerous to get much or far "within," lest the soul surveying its condition should say, "my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise and give thee"—then the need of a brother "without" will scarcely be heard, the burthens of Israel or the desolations of Zion will scarcely be looked at or inquired after.*

14—54.—These verses give us other scenes, still illustrating, according to the way of our Evangelist, matter of value to us.

The Lord listens to two challenges from His enemies ;

* As a distinctive mark of this Gospel, I would observe, that in the corresponding place in Matthew, the Lord says, that the Father will give "good things," to them that ask Him, but here it is the "Holy Spirit."—And again, in contrast with John, the Lord here says, that the Holy Spirit will be given on *our* asking, but there on *His* asking (John xiv. 16). But this distinction is also very characteristic of the two Gospels; for here, the Lord is teaching His disciples, training them, and calling their hearts and consciences, as I have said, into exercise; but in John, He is presenting Himself, and revealing Himself in dispensation, and, therefore, in that Gospel, He speaks of His place and ministry in the great matter of the grant of the Holy Ghost to the Church.

for in this world of our's, reproach was ever breaking His heart. But in the holy power of a great Teacher, as He was, He returns both these challenges on the head, or rather on the conscience, of His accusers. One said, that He was allied to Satan in what He was doing; another, that at any rate He had not sufficiently proved that He was allied to God in it.—“He casts out devils by Beelzebub,” said the one—“shew us a sign from heaven,” said the other. The Lord exposes such thoughts, and then lays open to them their condition, that they might learn that it was not in Him, but in themselves, this evil and this obscurity were to be found, for that He was “the finger of God,” and “the candle set on the candlestick.”

The Lord's reasoning here is beautifully simple and powerful. But I may observe, contrasting ver. 26 with Matt. xii. 45, that He does not here, as there, expressly apply the lesson of “the unclean spirit” to the state of Israel. And this difference is quite in keeping with the stricter Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel. So, His sentence upon the state of that generation is here delivered in the house, in one of *the social hours* of the Son of Man; in Matthew, a like sentence is pronounced from the seat of Judgment, in *the authority* of the Son of Man (chap. xxiii.); a difference which vividly illustrates the style of the two Gospels. And again, this passage leads me to suggest another difference. It is this—that St. John is the only Evangelist who speaks of the Lord under the title of “the Light of the world.” In the others, He is given to us in the figure of a “candle set on a candlestick”—a more homely style, I need not say. But the loftier language,

the richer and fuller thought, is more after the way in which St. John's Gospel is distinguished from the others.

The Lord, in His answer to the challenges of His enemies, leads to these thoughts. In the progress, however, of this scene, we have to notice an interruption. For what He was saying seems to have borne with such moral power on the heart of one who was listening, that, "as He spake," she lifted up her voice and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." This was a testimony to the power of the words of our divine Teacher, which is His glory in this Gospel. And a like testimony is given to Him in the next stage of this same scene, for again, "as He spake, a Pharisee who was present besought Him to dine with him." That man had evidently been moved by the power of His words, but not perhaps with the same affection as the poor woman, and he invites Him to his house. And so again, when He enters the house, He continues to act as the great Teacher still, rebuking the religious pride and dark hypocrisy which He found there, until a Scribe who was present, feeling the righteous rebukes, interrupts Him in like manner, and says to Him, "Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also." But the light abides faithful to its work, and goes on, still making manifest the darkness that was surrounding it, till the enmity of that darkness is fully raised, and Scribes and Pharisees together begin so to urge Him, that He has to withdraw the light, the power of which had thus become intolerable.

XII.—It is, however, to pursue His way as a Teacher, though in other places, that the Lord thus retires from among the Scribes, the lawyers, and the Pharisees. He enters the multitude, and at once resumes His teaching, taking for His subject what was suggested to Him in the house of the Pharisee—hypocrisy, and the persecution which a righteous remnant had to count upon.

Thus we have the light here, the great Teacher, as in the preceding chapter, doing His holy work. But I observe, that though much of the matter of this chapter is found in St. Matthew, it is given to us in a different manner. There it is simply as a discourse of the Lord, but here it comes forth as reply to others. But this distinction is still in the character of this Gospel; because in it, as I have already noticed, the Lord is dealing with man, and drawing forth his thoughts and conscience and affections into exercise, that they may be corrected, and formed by the mind of Christ according to God. The Lord's teaching, therefore, is often, as in this chapter, in the way of answer to the inquiries and thoughts of others. And as I observed in the close of the preceding chapter, that much which is delivered in Matthew, as from a judgment-seat, comes forth in Luke at a supper table, so I may say here, that that which had been as a sermon from an elevated place or pulpit in Matthew (chap. v.—vii.), comes forth here as words spoken in the heart of a multitude that were thronging about Him. There was more of the ease and relaxation of social life here.

And here again, as in the previous chapter, we have a testimony to the power of His words, for "one of the company," judging, as it seems, from the current of

the Lord's discourse, that He was set against oppression, and the assumptions of the rich, seeks Him to entertain His charge against a wrongful and injurious brother of his. But the Lord has only to act as the light that rebukes darkness wherever it finds it, and He now among the multitude addresses a word against covetousness, as just before, among the rulers, He had been addressing another word against religious pride and hypocrisy.

On such a subject we might well pause for a little. And specially here, because after this interruption, it seems to lead our Lord's thoughts to nearly the end of His present speaking.

The love of having, of acquiring and possessing, which is covetousness, is, as we know, one of the great principles which form the course of this evil world. "The lust of the eye," as St. John calls it. The great contradiction of it, as of every other principle that animates "the old man," was expressed in the life as well as in the teaching of Jesus. In Him to perfection we see that description of the Apostle made good—"in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of His joy and His deep poverty abounded unto the riches of His liberality." His poverty was deep. He had not where to lay His head. And when He wanted a penny, in order to say a word on the image and superscription which it bore, He had to ask to be *shown* one. And surely His liberality was rich. He had a big purse, so to speak, but he never opened it but for others. He had the resources of all creation to draw upon. He could command bread for thousands out of a few loaves, and gather fragments by baskets-full

afterwards. He could turn water into wine. He could summon a piece of money up from the sea, and, as the Lord of the earth, claim the beast of a stranger. This was surely a large purse. But He never opened it for His own use. He would rather go afoot, and be thirsty, and a hungered. And even out of His own slender store—the few loaves and fishes which He had for Himself and His disciples (His little purse, as I might be allowed to call it), He would still spare something for others (John xiii. 29).

Where are riches of liberality like this? What was all this in the constant daily life of Jesus, but the contradiction of the covetous course of the world? Men could not praise Him, because He did well to Himself. (Ps. xlix.) With what decision of heart was He always forgetting Himself, and with what holy conscious, authority might He resist the motion of that one who, on the occasion of this chapter, covetously desired a share of the inheritance. He deals with the interruption thus occasioned, as if a subject had been suggested to Him which was too weighty to be quickly laid down. He goes on with it, in the hearing of His disciples, till He shews them how this principle, this desire of having, this concern to acquire and to possess, must keep us unready for His coming—a subject which He then deeply and beautifully opens to our hearts and consciences. He aims to bring it morally very near to us; shewing that there are three different ways in which the soul is to entertain that object, or have communion with the great fact of the Lord's second advent—as the coming of a thief in the night to surprise the house; of a lord to reward his faithful

stewards; and of a loved master, to make his watchful servants happy by his restored presence.

Matthew suggests the same in chap. xxiv., xxv.; only with this difference; that the figure of watching, desirous, servants is changed for that of virgins waiting for the bridegroom. But the moral is the same. And the variousness of these figures has a great lesson for us. Because it tells us that Jesus seeks to range far and wide over our hearts. Presenting His return to our hearts under such different forms—a thief in the night, a master, and a bridegroom—He claims to be the object, the supreme object, of the different passions of our souls. Fear, hope, and joy, would rise in the breast of the good-man of the house, the stewards and the watchful servants or virgins, in commanding power. The fear of the thief, the hope of sharing the rewards, and the joy of the bridegroom's presence, would be *supreme* in the heart for the time. And this is happy, though it may be serious. It is happy to know that our Lord claims our affections. He knows that He has a right to be our supreme object. And the passion that does not render Him its *highest* exercise is not a *worshipping* passion.

This is holy and serious. For we may ask, is it so with us? Is the seat of our affections a place of worship? Is Jesus there in the chief room? "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," He says; and again, and that too, in this very chapter, "be not afraid of them that kill the body—I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear Him, which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." The watchfulness of *fear*, and the watchfulness of

desire are called forth. Every motion in the heart is only fully right when it is making confession to the Lordship or supremacy of Jesus.

The interruption given to our Lord led Him this way. In this manner the light in Him broke forth. For this world was but the place of man's darkness ; the light of heaven was, therefore, in all places where it entered, a reproving light (Eph. v. 13). The rich and the poor, the rulers and the multitudes, were alike exposed by it. As Jeremiah, in his day, visited "the poor," and found that they knew not the way of the Lord, and "the great ones," and found that they had altogether broken the bonds (Jer. v. 1—5). And so here with Jeremiah's Lord. Jesus had been in the midst of the accomplished Scribes and Pharisees, and among the multitude, but all was out of order. The most solemn impressions are left on His mind (ver. 49—59). He would have healed men. He came preaching peace, and had sent forth the Twelve and the Seventy with peace to every house and city. But the peace had to return to Him and them. Division now, and judgment of fire by and bye, were the portion of the earth. There was both intelligence and contention about the present things, but the testimony of God was not discerned, and man was satisfied with himself.

XIII.—The teaching of the previous chapter was all very important to our souls ; and now at the opening of this, we are in "the same season" as we read, and so I believe upon the same truth also. The man

who had accused his brother to the Lord learnt from the Lord, that he himself was on the way with another accuser to another Judge ; for those words in verses 58, 59, were, as I understand them, addressed to him. So here, some tell our Lord of the special sufferings of certain Galileans, as though they must have been sinners above others (John ix. 2), and thus they were bringing up their brethren, in like manner, for judgment. But the Lord would have them also know, that they were in the same condemnation, and if they repented not would all likewise perish.*

With the same thoughts of the sin of Israel upon His mind, the whole nation being ripe for the judgment of a mightier slaughter than that of the Galileans, the Lord indites the parable of the barren fig tree. This fig tree was planted in a vineyard, as Israel was set in God's house, in the midst of ordinances and privileges, watered and tended with all diligence and care ; but without fruit. Israel had no root in itself to yield God anything ; and the ministry of Jesus, the patient dresser of this vineyard, had now nearly proved this. By that ministry the goodness of God had been leading them to repentance (Rom. ii.)—it had been the digging about and dunging of this barren tree ; but, withal, there was no fruit. And we then see, in the next

* It has been observed by others, that this occurrence may have taken place in connection with the faction of Judas of Galilee (Acts v. 37), in which there were Galileans who refused Cæsar's authority, and who would therefore, of course, provoke Pilate. But the Galileans were Herod's subjects (iii. 1). It has been, therefore, supposed also, that this interference of Pilate occasioned the quarrel between him and Herod, of which we read in chap. xxiii. 12. Josephus mentions Pilate killing some Samaritans, on their way to their own temple, on Mount Gerizim.

little scene, that there was no sense in Israel of their real state. The sick were there, and thus the need of a physician; but they seem unconscious of it. A daughter of Abraham is found to be in disease, but the rulers of Abraham's house reject with pride the attendance of the good Physician.

In all this way the corrupted state of the nation passes before the mind of the Lord, and He seems to utter thoughts according to all this, reflecting on the great tree where the unclean had found their rest, and on the whole lump which had now felt the leaven. And in this mind He enters on His journey. The proved sin and the coming judgment of Israel being before Him, He pursues His way to the city.

But here let me notice, that in St. John, the Lord is seen frequently at Jerusalem, for Jerusalem had no higher character in the esteem of the Stranger from heaven, than any other spot on the earth. But in the other Gospels, the Lord is not seen to enter that city which was the ordained seat of His government as Son of David, till He enters it, when His ministry was closing, in royal state, offering the kingdom to the daughter of Zion, and when He is fully and formally rejected by her. In this Gospel by St. Luke, His gradual approach to the city for this purpose, is more distinctly traced than in either Matthew or Mark (see ix. 51, xiii. 22, 31, xvii. 11, xviii. 31, xix. 1, 11, 28). He seems to linger, as it were, from stage to stage, not willing to hasten the doom of the nation, because what was to happen to Him there was to fill up their sin, and leave them for judgment. He was waiting to be gracious, as now in this age, the long-suffering of God

in not sending Jesus is salvation, not willing that any should perish. And this reserve in His movement towards the city, reminds me of the departure from it of the glory in Ezekiel. (i.—xi.) The glory there lingers from stage to stage, as loath to depart, though the pollution in the city would not allow it to stay. And so here, the Lord lingers, in the same way delaying the hour of Jerusalem's judgment, journeying still towards it throughout the Gospel, but not reaching it till His ministry was closing.

It is, with strong and clear thoughts upon His heart, that He makes these approaches to the city, and eyes it in the distance. In chap. ix. 51, as I have observed already, He moved onward as though His journey were conducting Him to glory. In chap. xviii. 31, He has the city before Him as the place of His suffering. But here, in chap. xiii. 22, He is looking toward it as though His presence there was to close "the day of salvation" to Israel, and bring forth the judgment of God. It was this thought that was now on His mind; all the previous scenes of this chapter, the report of the Galileans, the parable of the fig-tree, and the hypocrisy of the rulers in Abraham's house, with the disease of Abraham's daughter, all led Him to these thoughts, as He is now approaching the city. And it may be that this mind is so expressed in His whole manner, that one who was observing Him, somewhat understanding His thoughts, says, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" A moment, however, of interest to our souls this was, and I would for a little pause over it.

It suggests to us this: that the Lord had a method—perfect, I need not say, like every thing else—in

answering questions. He never aims at merely conveying information, as we speak, but seeks to affect the heart or the conscience. It is not so much the *inquiry*, but the *inquirer*, that He deals with. Perhaps every case would shew this, but I would instance it shortly. Thus, when asked as to the time when His word against the temple should be accomplished, He does not satisfy that, but leads the disciples' thoughts into large and serious matter, sealing His instructions on their souls by the weighty parables of the ten virgins, and the talents. (Matt. xxiv., xxv.) In answer to John, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another," He does not say, "I am He, and ye need not look for another," but shews John's disciples those objects which were fitted to carry the answer home to them in real, living, power. (Matt. xi.) And so here; "Lord, are there few that be saved," was not answered formally, but morally, or in such a way as was suited to the man himself, giving him matter for serious self-inquiry and application.

A method, this, we may surely say, that bespeaks His wisdom and His goodness, and that He was indeed dealing with man, not displaying His own resources of knowledge, but in good earnest seeking and saving the lost. Man's method is a poor thing. For look at Jesus in contrast with the learned men, or "the princes" (as Paul speaks) "of this world." When they were asked *where Christ should be born*, they answered formally—truly, it is true, but formally—not seeking to stir the conscience of the king on the occasion thus offered them. (Matt. ii.) But when Jesus was asked *of whom He was born*, "where is thy

father," His answer comes not merely to their ears, but with all serious and solemn power to their consciences. (John viii.)

He needs not our commendation, beloved ; but it should be happy to any of us to ponder His perfections, and admire His beauty. And I am sure that these reflections are of value now-a-days. For the present is a time, when many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increasing. And this should be a caution to our souls ; for the saint has always to watch against what is called the spirit of the times. St. Paul, when he prays for the saints, that they may grow in *knowledge*, first desires that they might have the *spiritual understanding* (Eph. i. 17, 18 ; Col. i. 8). For the mere intellect is not valued. Rather let us lay our inquiries aside, than follow them in the acuteness of human ability. And is it, beloved, out of season to recur to the thought of one who lived to Christ in days before our's ?—*that the desire to know much even in spiritual things may be the witness that God Himself is not known in reality.* To know *Himself*, is life eternal. And as another of our own day has most profitably observed—"the natural man often receives truth more quickly than the saint, because the saint has to learn it in his conscience, to have that exercised before God by what he is learning." Most needful is this admonition. We may hasten to be wise and full of knowledge in this busy age, and the soul be injured, deeply injured, all the while.

In this reply of the Lord to the question now put to Him, I apprehend that the "striving," and the "seeking," are not merely different measures of intensity in

the same action, but morally different actions. The "seeking" comes upon the alarm of the Master's rising up, and it is fear that awakens it; the "striving" is an action of the heart and conscience before God, ere the Master of the house had risen up, an action, therefore, not resulting simply from the fear of being left on the outside. And how often is this description of "seeking" exhibited among ourselves. Sudden alarm will call forth religious affections, but they live only while the danger passes. As says the prophet, "O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pains as of a woman in travail—yet will the Lord give Him into the hand of them that seek His life." (Jer. xxii.)

This passage is thus one of very important admonition to all. But as the Lord pursues His way, it is still not of Himself, either in His suffering or glory, that He is thinking, but of Jerusalem, and her sin and her judgment. Some tell Him of Herod, and his purposes against Him; but the Lord simply tells them, that Herod and all his purposes could not prevail against Him, for that, unimpeded by him and every thing else, He must walk on till He reached Jerusalem, which as eminent in privilege under God, was eminent in wickedness against Him also, and had to fill up the measure of her guilt by slaying the last and chiefest of the prophets. Herod's rage was not, therefore, to be considered, for Jesus must walk through his jurisdiction. And thus it is that Jerusalem is the object which the blessed Lord still has on His mind, as when He set out in verse 22. And to all this, with which

His soul had in this way been labouring, He gives expression, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that 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 chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Jerusalem "would not." The care of the hen was refused, but the fox was already within ; and therefore there is to be, nothing but present scattering instead of gathering. Herod and Rome were boasted in, and God and his Christ refused. "Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it." And the Son of God has but to leave His mountain for the present in their possession, until, in the spirit of repentance and faith, the people should welcome Him back, and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

XIV.—XVI.—In these chapters we have the Lord's characteristic way in this Gospel very strongly marked. Throughout them He is the Teacher, the social Son of man, addressing Himself to all around Him, whether

* This Herod was the fourth son of Herod who in Matt. ii., is called "Herod the king." From chap. iii. 1, we learn that Galilee was the scene of his government, as may also be drawn from this passage. Some have judged that he desired to get the Lord out of his dominions, because the Lord had a great and growing interest there, and because he hated Him for His righteousness and His testimony. Not daring, however, to put Him to death, because of the people, he seeks to drive Him out, or frighten Him away. He would have Him, perhaps, act the part of a fearful one, and thus act unworthy of Himself ; as Nehemiah's enemies sought to ensnare that dear and simple man in his day. See Neh. vi. 10—14.

in the power of one who was convicting the conscience, or in the grace of one who could bind up the heart.

The contents of these chapters are very generally peculiar to this Gospel. Several parables are delivered which we find nowhere else. And I may here observe that there are more parables in Luke than in either of the Evangelists ; and this still shews the special mind and action of the Lord in this Gospel.

As we pass along the pages of the Evangelic narrative, or along the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world, what a character do we watch gradually unfolding Himself ! And what a simple piece of truth-telling are we listening to ! In every page (to use the language of another) we are struck with a candour, a simplicity and a naturalness not to be found in the same degree in any other book ; and as to its great subject, Jesus, who, save by admitting their inspiration, can explain the fact that a few fishermen should have conceived the idea of a character of such perfection as no author, even in the most enlightened age or country, ever equalled ? “The Gospel bears an imprint of truth so great, so striking, so inimitable, that its *inventor* would have been more wonderful than its *hero* is.” And, as has been also said, there is no repose for *reason* but in *faith*, for the existence of the Bible cannot be accounted for without bringing God in.

There is no moment or passage in His history, at which we might not have paused to listen to all this. But I observe it here, as we enter on a portion of our Gospel, in which the blessed Jesus has to do with men in great variety of character ; and while the Evangelist is bearing Him along the chequered scene, the

naturalness of the story, and the perfection of Him who is the great object of it, may be easily noticed by us all.

The first scene is laid in a Pharisee's house, where, as His custom was, He had come, upon invitation, to dine. The principals of the company, as we may judge them to be, watch Him to entangle Him just as *He enters the house*. He shortly answers their thoughts, making them their own judges and witnesses.

On His being free, if I may so say, to look round Him, *after He had entered*, the object that He first looks at is, the guests taking their seats at the table. He is offended. The old mind of Adam, and not the mind according to God, formed this circumstance, simple as it was. They chose the chief rooms. This was Adam. This was according to that desire to be something, which, of old, grafted itself on the heart of man. Jesus could not but be offended. In Him, from the beginning hitherto, and down to the death on the cross, there had been and was to be the full contradiction of this. Adam was nothing, a creature of the dust, and he sought to be everything. Jesus was everything, but emptied Himself of all. He became man, and in that form humbled Himself in every way. In the person He assumed, or the station in life that he filled—in the testimony which He bore to Himself, or the cloud with which He veiled His glory—in all this He ever took the “lowest room.” But here, in the Pharisee's house, He finds Himself in the midst of those who were choosing the chiefest. How could He but be offended? Such guests were not to His mind.

Then the host who bids them becomes His object. But there was no relief for Him there. Selfishness in another form shews itself to Him. The host's board was not such an one as He had been spreading in this world since He came into it. For He had been feeding multitudes in desert places who had nothing to give Him in return. The selfishness of the "old man" grieved Him now, as his pride had just before. The host is not after the mind of this perfect Witness of the mind of God, any more than his guests.

Then, after the guests are seated and the feast proceeds, *the conversation at table* leads Jesus to other sorrows.

I believe it was a gracious motion that had come over the heart of one of the company, when he said, "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." He was, I doubt not, attracted by the Lord. But this matters not. It directed the Lord's mind to very serious thoughts on the whole scene which was at that moment under His eye. He saw a well-filled table. Guests in numbers were there—as many as had been invited. But the thought seems to arise in His mind, if God had spread this table, He would not have gathered His guests so easily. And this reflection gives occasion to the parable of the Marriage of the king's son.

It was a painful thought to Jesus—and so will it be to us who have His mind. There is relief for it, surely, in the knowledge of this, that "the foundation of God standeth sure"—and that the unbelief of man shall never touch the purposes of God. But to think that when man spreads a table, guests will be found

there, as many as are bidden, but that when the living God makes a feast, not one that is *merely* bidden eats of His supper! a mess of their own pottage is preferred. A piece of ground, a yoke of oxen, or a wife, will estrange the affections of the very best of us—and no one guest at His costly board would the Lord of life and glory find, if He Himself did not *bring them in* and *compel* them. Mere bidding would never do. It was tried but it failed—and He who was at the cost of spreading the table must be at the trouble of gathering the company. His oxen and His fatlings shall load the board, and His servants shall visit the lanes and alleys, the highways and hedges, to get some to eat of them.

Was ever a feast treated so? The present scene answers that, as the sorrowing heart of Jesus mused upon it.

Surely He came into the world to be thoroughly wearied, as one has said. How could He but be a man of sorrows in a place fashioned and filled, throughout all its order, by the pride of life and the lust of the eye? He did not wait for His darkest hours to make Him “acquainted with grief.” The most promising moments, the social hours of human friendliness, as we see here, brought their sorrow with them to the heart of this blessed Stranger. And this parable tells us so.*

We have not, however, carried our Lord through the whole journey yet. We have seen Him grieved

* In Matthew, this parable stands in another connection, having more direct reference to what was Jewish. See Matt. xxii.

and offended on entering the house, and while in the house, but we have now to watch Him on leaving it.

The multitude follow Him. But this won't do. This was done every day. Thousands waited on Him continually, thronging and pressing Him along the streets or highways. But that won't reach the heart of Christ (viii. 45). Neither does this action of the multitude; for it does not bespeak their conscious need of Him as a Saviour. It is rather their adoption of Him as a teacher or a pattern. And that, as the first thing, will not do. He turns to address this crowd with words of solemn warning. His soul is not at that ease in the midst of them which speaks their full welcome to Him; for they had not come to Him in character. Nicodemus would have honoured Him as a rabbi, or a scholar—the people at the lake of Galilee, as a king—the multitude here, as their pattern or forerunner; but He is not at home in such company—not fully at home. He is not grieved in the same measure, perhaps, that He had been in the house which He had just left, but there was no rest or joy for His spirit here. He must go onward ere He reach His rest, as His words to the multitude tell us.

When we think of this for a moment or two, we may well say, we know not how sufficiently to bless God for it. Let us *give* to Him in what shape or way we please, all will not do: we must *receive* from Him. The Pharisee gives Him a feast inside the house, and the multitude give Him their respect and admiration outside; but He is either grieved, or at the most, unsatisfied. He passes on through all this, till "publicans and sinners" draw near to hear Him. They do

not come to give Him anything, but to get something from Him (xv. 1). Then did He in spirit rejoice; His heart tasted the desired fruit of its journey, and was satisfied.

What can surpass this in consolation to us? These poor publicans, these tainted ones of the city, would have no business in the Pharisee's house; nor did they affect to follow the Lord with the multitude, for they are unworthy, and know that they are so. But they can go and touch the hem of His garment, or take their pitchers to the Fountain, and there "in shame and poverty sit down." And so they do; and so they are welcome to do. He is happier to give them than they are to receive. Jesus had now travelled far, far in the spirit, I mean. He had gone to, and through, and from, the house of the Pharisee, and along the road with admiring crowds, but it was wearisome to Him. He found no rest, till now that the poor sinner came to get from Him. For the joy that fills this chapter tells us that His weariness was now over. The fold that had received the lost sheep, the house that witnessed the recovered piece of money, and the home of the father that had entertained the returned prodigal, set off, as in figures, the Saviour's joy now in the midst of publicans and sinners.

This is beyond expression—wonderful to tell it; but this to Jesus was the house of God, this to Him was the gate of heaven. And we ought to wait at it a little longer. He had been charged by the Pharisees with receiving sinners, as though His ministry did not secure righteousness, but gave liberty to evil. Of course He might have pleaded various answers to this.

He might have defended His grace to sinners, on the ground of the necessity of the case, or on the ground of God's glory. But in this chapter, from beginning to end, in each of the lovely parables, He vindicates it, simply on the ground of the joy that He, and the Father, and all heaven itself, were finding in it.

Only think of that, beloved. If the Lord God be asked a reason for His ways of salvation with you and me, He says that He takes delight in them—they make Him and His glorious habitation to rejoice. What assurance, what consolation, spring from that ! Would his neighbours, think you, murmur at the shepherd's joy over his lost sheep now found by him ; or the woman's friends grudge her pleasure, as she swept her piece of money into her lap ? And so it is with God. It is His own joy in the salvation of sinners, that Jesus proposes as His warrant or vindication. And why should man either murmur or disbelieve ? May not the Lord prepare joy for Himself, as well as the shepherd ? Nay, though it cost Him toil and sacrifice ; as the shepherd had to go to the wilderness, and the woman to sweep the house. And who dare deny our hearts the assurance and consolation of this ? Let us cherish the thought deeply in our souls, that the gospel of our peace is the spring of joy to Him who planned and accomplished it ; that our God has done nothing less than this, *laid the scene of His own happiness in our salvation*, as these parables testify to us.

This chapter is, in this way, a gate of heaven to us, as it was to the wearied feet of Jesus. He had travelled, as we have seen, through Pharisees, guests, host, and crowds of attendants ; and was now sitting

with sinners who knew their need of Him, and came to get what they wanted. Heaven, in one sense, is but this spot stretched out—the habitation of saved sinners and of a rejoicing Saviour.

The Lord, as we shall now find as we still pass on with Him, has, however, others to converse with still. He has to meet *disciples*, after all this variety at which we have been looking. And accordingly, at the opening of chap. xvi., He does meet them. He gives them a word to stir their diligence, and encourage their hopes. He tells them to aim high in their expectations, and to lay out their energies to sure and eternal profit. Being disciples, they are to be regarded as having already come back like prodigals, and their business now was to value the hopes which grace had set before them, and to “make to themselves friends” of every talent and opportunity, as knowing that their labour should not be in vain in the Lord.

A word in season to disciples was this, enforced on them in the parable of the Unjust steward. For our great Teacher had chosen words, words seven times refined in the fire ; and He rightly divides them among all. And this we may now still further see ; for the Pharisees are to close these scenes, as they opened them.

The heavenly principles with which the Lord had just exhorted His disciples, these men deride, for they were covetous. They were everything which the world could esteem ; and this estimation they sought and served for ; and of course they could not but deride the heavenly principles of the Son of God. But He exposes their moral state, and then, in a parable,

the doom of that state. He convicts them of having been false to that very law in which they boasted, and also of having refused that word of the kingdom which the God of the law had sent forth to succeed it. Their whole moral condition, might, thus, in a sentence or two, be exposed and rebuked. But this was nothing to them ; they were served in the world ; their principles fed them sumptuously, and clothed them in fine linen and purple ; and in this they were satisfied, though upon this lay the judgment of God.

This was the closing solemn word, addressed to "the accomplished religionist" (as the Pharisees have been called) of that day. The mind of the Lord makes this its last disclosure on this great moral occasion. It had dealt with guests and host, and multitudes, and disciples, and Pharisees. It had divided the word of truth among them. And if we prize the thoughts of God on all that we see around us, we shall study such exercises of the mind of Christ as these. His candle, in this way, should shine on our head, and by His light we should walk through all the darkness which so thickly and variously surrounds us.

I know nothing as a grand display of divine morals beyond this. The soul, in going through these chapters, should be lost in admiration. The style of the Lord here, illustrates what another has said of Him— "He watched His opportunity of instructing : it was brought out on the suitable occasion. Hence the danger of systematizing christianity ; for it was not so introduced. The law was an ordered system, but grace and truth were incapable of being exhibited at once (save in His person), but required to be unfolded gra-

dually, as man's necessities discovered themselves." This is very just, I think. And from this it is gathered, most justly also, "that it is of no small importance to notice attentively, not only the matter, but the manner, of the Lord's discourses; that which led to them, as well as the point to which they tend."

This is a right reflection on the perfect ways of this our divine Teacher. And yet, beloved, perfect as He was in such character, as in every other, He went for an unlettered man in the world. That reproach was part of what He bore for us. For there was nothing of degradation in the presence of a mis-judging world, that He would not submit to for our sakes. "He has never learnt," said they. Not only a carpenter's son in their esteem, but a man of no education also. And it was so. His doctrine was not His, but His who sent Him (John vii. 15, 16). He was an unlettered man; and He was ready to meet that shame at man's hand, amid the general scorn, and loss of reputation.

How He dwells alone, and above us, dear brethren! We should not like that. "That villain shame," as the Pilgrim's Progress speaks, "would bring a little blood in our cheek." But Jesus, Jesus, the perfect Jesus! It is repose and refreshing to turn to Him, if wearied with ourselves and all beside—if "sick of man, and his wisdom, and his doings."

But there is another thing to be observed here, and it turns to us for searching and warning. Jesus judged righteous judgment: this scene tells us so. He was not to be flattered. He did not try either persons or circumstances, in reference to Himself. That is where we so commonly fail in all our judgments. We see

objects, whether persons or things, so much in our own light. How have these circumstances affected *ourselves*? how have these people treated *us*? These are the inquiries of the heart; and in the answer they get, the judgment is too commonly formed. We are *flattered* into good thoughts of people, and *slighted* into hard ones. Jesus was not such an one. The Pharisee's compliment and good fare did not affect His judgment on the whole scene in his house. The friendliness of a social hour could not relax the rightness of His sense of things, as Peter's recent confession, on another occasion, did not hinder the rebuke that Peter's worldliness deserved. Jesus was not to be flattered. Like the God of Israel in old times. His ark may be boasted in, and brought into the battle with a shout, but He is not to be flattered by this. Israel shall fall for their unrighteousness. (1 Sam. iv.)

What a lesson for us! What reason have we to guard against the judgments of self-love! against the trying and weighing of things or persons, in relation to ourselves! This firm, unswerving mind of Jesus may be our encouragement, as well as our pattern, in this; and we may pray that neither "this world's flattery nor spite" move us from having our thoughts as before the Lord all the day!

The sense, however, of God's way, as being so above our's, and of the perfections of Jesus as only serving to expose our many errors, must not be allowed to "swallow us up with overmuch sorrow." We are disposed oftentimes so to consider and mourn over *experiences*, as to get below the place where *faith* would put us. This, however, must not be. Faith must

prevail. And faith has a separating power, as well as conviction. Conviction of sin separates to the place of sorrow, as it did Nathanael to the shade of the fig-tree, and as it will the repentant Israel, by-and-bye, "every family apart, and their wives apart." (Zech. xii.) But so faith. It concentrates the power of seeing and hearing upon its object, opening the ear of a prodigal to the music which the Father had commanded, but closing it even to the recollection of past follies, and to the murmurs of present conscious coldness.

Precious faith—it deals with God. The prodigal was silent. He did not stay his father's hand, as though he was doing too much for him. That might have appeared modest and humble, but it would not have been so—for true humbleness forgets ourselves. His silence at the table was faith. And it had a rich feast before it. Among other things, it might have fed on the well known truth, that the *ascending* affections are never equal to the *descending*. A child never loves a parent with the intenseness with which a parent loves his child. Yea, and more than this—the parent is satisfied to have it so. A father is satisfied to know that his love will never get its "recompense in the same" from the bosom of his child.

These thoughts might have fed the silent heart of the prodigal, as he ate of the fattened calf. And they should be our thoughts toward our heavenly Father. Not that He is indifferent to the state of our hearts towards Him. That would be neither His glory or our joy. But He knows that *His* love will ever be the larger. He will ever be the one to "exceed"—as David with Jonathan. For He is in the higher place,

and that place will maintain its rights and attributes. And it is among the attributes of the *descending* affection (which comes out of the higher place), as I have said, to flow with the richer and more generous current; and all that faith has to do is to allow this, and to rejoice just because it is so. Faith ascends to God, and makes that journey in silence. Not even the complaints and confessions of a righteous self-judging spirit are to be heard. But nothing but that "light which no man can approach unto" can transcend the elevation of that rest and dwelling-place up to which it bears the heart in triumph. "Lord, increase our faith"!

XVII. 1—10.—The reflection, with which the Lord opens these verses, appears to have been suggested to His mind by the scenes of chap. xiv.—xvi. All that had been passing under His eye and ear led Him to thoughts of offences; and such thoughts find their utterance here, in secret with His elect. He found hindrances to the display and settlement of His kingdom, in the place where all should have been prepared for it; and He is led to pronounce woe on the offender.

Offences are those principles which are inconsistent with the nature of His kingdom, and hinder its exhibition;—"obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness." And in order the more carefully to guard His disciples against offending, it may be, that the Lord gives them two admonitions, by which, two essential virtues of His kingdom were to be preserved—its *purity*, and its *graciousness*. If there were trespass, He requires rebuke; for this would maintain His house

in pure or holy order ; if there were repentance, He commands forgiveness ; for this would maintain His house in loving, gracious order.

But these demands which He makes on the hearts of His disciples, they find to be quite beyond them, and lead them to know that they must need get strength out of another for them. Under this consciousness they say, "increase our faith"—faith being that which takes us into the resources of One who is greater than ourselves, and draws virtue out of that which has been divinely ordained to meet our necessity.

For in addition to our previous meditations on faith, I might say, that, considered as that by which a sinner is justified, faith is simply the believing of a testimony, that testimony being the Gospel ; our justification being "by faith, that it might be by grace." This intimates that work must be excluded. And this the fourth chapter of Romans discusses and teaches. But scripture also speaks of faith, as the principle which animates the life of a believer. This the eleventh chapter of Hebrews presents to us. And in this character, it is a growing virtue or principle in the soul. It may be either weak or strong, great or little. As we read here, "Lord, increase our faith ;" and as we elsewhere read, "O ye of little faith ;" and again, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ;" and again, "your faith groweth exceedingly."

In this sense, scripture considers it, as I before said, a growing principle in the soul. It is our entrance into the power of the testimony which is believed, "the substance (confidence) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen." It is, we

may say, the power of divine life in the soul, and may be in health and vigour there, or the contrary. It stands for the energy of the kingdom of God within us. Scripture mentions it as that which apprehends God, waits on Him, walks with Him. So that if faith be strong, those, and the like graces and actions, are fresh and lively. And being this, it should be with real unfeigned humiliation we speak, when we confess that *our faith is weak*; for this, if made in spiritual intelligence, is a confession how little our souls are alive to God.

Scripture, I need not say, abounds with notices of this great principle. It considers it in its sources, its actings, its qualities, its value with God, and the like. And the Lord here, in answer to the desire of His apostles for an increase of it, describes it to them in its two chief attributes, its sovereignty, so to speak, and its self-renunciation, being that which can *command the sycamine-tree into the sea*, but then will come back to God and say, that *all is nothing*. These are its necessary excellencies. It takes all blessing from God, but leaves all glory with God. (Rom. iv.)

11—19.—These few verses form another distinct portion of our Gospel. The Lord is again looked at as on His way to Jerusalem, passing through Samaria and Galilee; and in this scene, simple in its materials as it is, He takes a place before us which may well fill our souls with joy and praise—the place of the altar, God's ordained place of sacrifice and worship. This

suggests a subject of deep interest to our souls, which I would follow for a little.

All knowledge of God must flow from revelation, for "man by wisdom knows not God." True worship has the same source. Each of these, knowledge of God and worship, is always to be according to such revelation as He has at the time, or in the dispensation, given of Himself.

Understanding this I might instance shortly a line of true worshippers from the beginning.

Abel was a true worshipper; for he worshipped in faith, or according to revelation. (Heb. xi.) The first-ling of his flock was according to the promise of the *bruised* seed of the woman, and according to the coats of skin, with which the Lord God had covered his parents.

Noah followed *Abel*, and worshipped in the faith of the woman's *bruised* seed. He took the new inheritance only in virtue of blood (Gen. viii. 20). He was therefore a true worshipper also.

Abraham was a true worshipper, worshipping God as He had revealed Himself to him (Gen. xii. 7).

Isaac, precisely in the track of *Abraham*, worshipped the God who had appeared unto him, not affecting to be wise, but, like *Abraham*, raising his altar to the *revealed* God (Gen. xxvi. 24, 25).

Jacob was a true worshipper. The Lord appears to him in his sorrow and degradation, in the misery to which his own sin had reduced him, revealing Himself as the One in whom "mercy rejoices against judgment;" and he at once owns God as thus revealed to him, and this revealed God of *Bethel* was his God to the end. (Gen. xxviii., xxxv.) Here was enlarged

revelation of God, and worship following such revelation, and that is true worship.

The nation of Israel was a true worshipper; for God had revealed Himself to them, and established His memorial in the midst of them. They knew what they worshipped (John iv. 22). But in the midst of this worshipping nation, there might still be true worshippers who did not conform to the divinely established order, provided their departure from it was still according to new revelation from God. As in example, *Gideon, Manoah, David*, were all true worshippers, though they offered sacrifices on rocks or in threshing-floors, and not in the appointed national place, just because, by a new and special revelation, the Lord had consecrated those new altars. (See Judges vi., xiii., 1 Chron. xxii.)

The healed leper, in this passage of our gospel, exactly on this principle, was a true worshipper, though, like Gideon, Manoah, or David, he departed from the usual order, just because he apprehended God in a new revelation of Himself. The healing which he had felt in his body had a voice in the ear of faith, it being only God who could heal a leper (2 Kings v. 7).

The Church of God is now, in this dispensation, a true worshipper on exactly the same ground; worshipping according to enlarged revelation, having fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And this is still, like the other cases, worship "in truth," because according to revelation. But it is "in spirit" also; because the Holy Ghost has now been given as the power to worship, enabling the saints to call God "Father," and Jesus Christ "Lord" (1 Cor.

viii. 6). There is now *communicated power*, as well as *revelation*, for the purpose of worship.

This subject of worship is indeed a blessed one for further meditation to us all. The faith of the Samaritan leper, who turned from the priests at Jerusalem to lay his offering at the feet of Jesus, thus using Him as God's anointed altar, has suggested it. He heard the voice of healing—he owned the God of Israel in the mercy that had met him—this was revelation to him, and he believed it, and was led by it into the sanctuary. And this that had happened to him is the only ground of worship from creatures such as we have been, live we in what age or under what economy we may. He had been healed, and he knew that he had been healed. On what ground can we stand to worship but this? Till washed and cleansed, can we be at peace in the Divine presence? We may cry out in the bitterness of a surprised conscience, but that is not being at peace in God's presence—that is not worship. It may be the way of the drawing of the Father, and end in the sanctuary; but it is not worship. The blood of Christ purging the conscience from dead works, alone leads to the service or worship of the living God (Heb. ix. 14.) As in the very heavens, and so for ever, the saints in their glories worship, while standing on this ground, as the floor of their Temple (Rev. v. 9). "Our calling," as one has beautifully said, "is to consecrate our life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption—our whole life is to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and a continued witness of our Redeemer." It is

mercy, as the Spirit Himself teaches, that opens the Temple doors, and leads us in to exercise our priesthood before God (Rom. xii. 1, 9). And that mercy is our's, we know, only by the hands of our wounded, stricken Redeemer. As that fervent hymn tells it out:—

“Hark, how the blood-bought host above
Conspire to chant Immanuel's love,
In sweet harmonious strains!
And as they strike their golden lyres,
This theme alone their bosom fires,
That grace triumphant reigns!

“Join thou, my soul, for thou canst tell
How sovereign grace broke up thy cell,
And burst thy native chains!
And from that dear and blessed day,
How oft art thou constrain'd to say,
That grace triumphant reigns!”

We must, after this manner, take our own part in the worship. As the Psalmist, after calling on all creation to praise, says, “Praise thou the Lord, O my soul.”

20—XVIII. 8.*—In this portion, we again get another subject for our thoughts, as disciples of the great Teacher, who was ordering all for our edification. “The kingdom of God” is here treated by the Lord, in answer to an inquiry from the Pharisees. We do not learn the circumstances of this scene, where it was, or when it was; such notices are beside the purpose of the Spirit in our Evangelist, as I have said; but we have largely our Lord's teaching upon the matter itself.

* Chap. xviii. 1, ought rather to be, “to the end that *they* ought always,” &c., &c.; thus linking this parable with the previous discourse.

His manner here illustrates what I have already said in p. 87, on His answering questions. He addresses the conscience, giving a word suited to the *moral state of the inquirer*, rather than to *his question*. And with this view, He here “rightly divides the word” between different hearers ; for He turns from the Pharisees to the disciples in ver. 22, giving different views of the kingdom of God to each ; that given to the Pharisee being faithful to his condition of soul ; and that given to the disciples being seasonable food for the renewed mind, according to its growing capacity. As He says in another place, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” And so, in the wisdom of the Spirit of Christ, when Paul was met by the inquisitive Athenians, he did not answer them according to their inquisitiveness, but declared to them the serious things of God, of judgment, and of repentance.

The subject of this short discourse is, “the kingdom of God.” That expression describes a dispensation in which God or power is brought in. As the Apostle says, “the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” It is, I judge, as another has said, “the exercise or exhibition of the ruling power of God under any circumstances.”

It has different exhibitions ; and it is this truth which our Lord considers for our instruction. He teaches us that this kingdom of God is now “within”—as the Apostle says of it, “it is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost”—but, by and bye, it is to be, “the days of the Son of man,” or manifest glorious power. In St. John, the Lord speaks of these two forms of the king-

dom also, only under different expressions from those which we have here. I mean in His confession to Pilate, where he owns Himself "king of the Jews," but lets the Roman know also, that that character of His power could not then be manifested, but that for the present it was to take another form under Him as "the witness unto the truth." (John xviii.) So here ; it is now the kingdom "within," and, by and bye, it will be the kingdom of "the days of the Son of man." The glories belong to the same Jesus, but they are diverse. It is hidden glory now, glory within, in the Holy Ghost, the glory of a sanctuary known only to God and the worshippers—it will be displayed glory by and bye, or glory in the world, known from one end of the heaven to the other.

Having thus testified these two forms of the kingdom, the Lord goes on to teach what was to take place, ere it could pass into its second form. He tells the disciples, that He Himself was "to suffer many things ;" that they were to be in "desire," to "always pray and not faint," and to dwell in the separated places, the house top and the field, the places of prayer and desire, as Isaac and Peter witness. (Gen. xxiv., Acts x.) And then, as to all beside, He further tells them, that just on the eve of the kingdom taking its worldly or manifested form, or when "the days of the Son of man" should begin the world would be found in all the surfeit and intoxication of the times of Noah or Lot, and that, consequently, those "days of the Son of man" would break in upon them with the surprise of lightning, but with a just discerning also between man and man, between those who are in the appointed

“desire” and “prayer,” and those who have found in planting and building, in buying and selling, the spoil of their hand, and are satisfied.

Isaiah appears to see these two in the bed, at the mill, and in the field, in this day of the Lord (chap. xxxiii. 14, 15). Malachi, also, looks at them in the day of discerning, when the same Sun, which rises with healing in his wings on the one, will burn as an oven for the other. (ch. iii. iv.) For this day of the Lord will act with discerning or in judgment. One shall be taken, and the other left.

There was, however, a third object. In the history of the times of Lot, there was not only Lot himself, and the people of Sodom, but also Lot's wife. She perished not in Sodom, but between Sodom and Zoar. The loss of Sodom to her was *exile*, not *deliverance*. Many of the camp treated separation from Egypt with the same mind. And this yields a solemn practical question for us. How does our soul entertain the thought of separation from the world? In the esteem of our hearts is it exile or redemption? Are we singing over that thought with Israel at the Red Sea, or, with Israel afterwards, remembering the fish of Egypt, its onions, its leeks, and its cucumbers? Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. She sighed as the exile of Sodom. Do we sing as the ransomed of the Lord out of it?

“Remember Lot's wife,” was the Saviour's weighty word in the midst of this discourse on the kingdom of God. And it is a weighty and serious word to lie on our hearts.

And the Lord further teaches us, that in neither form

is this kingdom of God subject to the "lo here or lo there" of man. It makes itself known. It is the property of *power* to do so. Whether the kingdom be within, or abroad in the world, it will make itself known. As the Lord says of the Comforter within, "but ye know Him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And I may instance Paul as being thus *conscious* of its presence. As soon as it filled his soul, as soon as he had "the Son revealed in him" (and that was the kingdom within), it had power at once to separate him to God. With this new and wondrous joy in him, he could go forth, with Abraham, from home and kindred. He did not want man's seal to be set on his title, nor man's supplies to be opened for his happiness. He neither conferred with flesh and blood, nor did he go up to Jerusalem, to them that were Apostles before him, as though he needed their countenance. He went down to Arabia, where sands and solitude awaited him, instead of the pillars in the Church and the city of solemnities. For the Son was revealed *within*—his title was sealed, and his resources were opened there, by the hand of God Himself, and he was independent of man's sanction and man's supplies. God was both his witness and his portion. (Gal. i.)

But this may well humble us, beloved. For how little have we learnt this divine independency of the creature? Even to look to Arabia with our back upon Jerusalem, would it not be something too much for us? Have we such a kingdom within, such light and strength and joy in God, that "flesh and blood" are no longer our resources? What would our hearts feel, if only sands and deserts were before us? But the first joy of

adoption in Paul gave every place on earth the same character to him, and that first joy should be ours to the end.

The parable of the Importunate widow closes this discourse. It may raise the question with us, whence comes this cry, this day and night cry, of the elect? The saints now gathering are to rejoice in the delay of the Lord as salvation to others. (2 Pet. iii.) But the Jewish election of the latter day are often presented as crying on the Lord the righteous Judge to shew Himself. And the Lord appears to have them, the rather, in his view, as He uses this parable. Still, however, there is a cry from the saints, in some sense, unceasingly heard of God. There was a cry from Abel's blood. There was, we also learn, a cry from Sodom. (Gen. iv., xviii.) There is a cry from the unpaid wages of the hireling. (James v.) Stones may have a voice in the ear of the Lord (Hab. ii. 11, Luke xix. 40.) And our divine Teacher may have that thought here. He may intimate the silent eloquence of a martyr's blood, of a patient uncomplaining believer's wrongs, which are to get their answer in the day of the Lord.

But after the Lord had given His elect this high place with God, this place of interest and prevalency, He closes with words fitted to put a holy reserve upon their hearts, and to make them look to *themselves*, rather than to their *privileges and powers*. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth." Surely this was the way of a perfect Master, mingling the chastened and the brilliant lights together, giving a character of holiness to our dignities,

and to the exercise of our highest functions and powers imparting a modest sense of ourselves.

9—30.—Here we find another subject in like manner distinctly considered.

There are three scenes in this portion of our Gospel, two of which we have in Matthew and Mark. Our Evangelist does not notice the circumstances of them in time or place, but he appears to present them together for the purpose of illustrating one great moral subject, according to his usual manner.

The subject is our *approach to God, or way of entrance into the kingdom*; and it fitly follows the previous scene, in which the *nature* of the kingdom was considered and taught as we saw. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, in the case of the little children, and of the young ruler, we are taught what are the characteristics of those who enter and have their welcome in the kingdom.

It is the renouncing of self in every form. This is our calling, our perfection, to forsake all that is of man, or of the flesh, or of the world, that we may be established certainly and happily in God Himself and in His rich provision for us.

These three cases set forth this self-renouncing. The poor broken-hearted publican did so—the little child does so—the young ruler, had he become the Lord's follower, would have done so. By these instances, and His reflections upon them, the Lord opens this doctrine. The apostles, afterwards, under the Holy

Ghost, go on with it more fully. For the thorough emptying of the creature, or the renunciation of the flesh, is, we need not say, essential to the obedience of faith.

The law had previously come, seeking for good in the flesh, or fruit out of it unto God. But it found none. The Son of God, on the contrary, came in such a way as condemned it (Rom. viii. 3). Paul accordingly, in his doctrine, has done with it altogether. He saw it to be a mighty wreck—not as yet fully out of sight, or gone to the bottom, but left by him to perish in its own corruption. He had been cast on a new world, in a new creation, with the risen Son of God.

It is edifying to mark the fervency and decision with which in every shape and pretence of it, he either escapes from it, or renounces it. Is it subject to *condemnation*? Yes; but Christ has borne the judgment of it, and he, a believer in Christ, is free. Has the flesh its *religion*? He counts it all as loss and dung; its ordinances and observances, its bondage and fear, he disclaims and refuses, glorying in the righteousness of God by faith. Has it *wisdom*? Yes; the world has its princes, the wise, the scribe, and the disputer, but Paul insists that God has made all this as foolishness, and covets only that wisdom which the Spirit searches out and reveals. He escapes from all that it was exposed to, he renounces all that it could pretend to. He was not in it, but in Christ raised from the dead for him. And this is glorious faith, which, after this manner, leaves the flesh in its condemnation on the one hand, and, on the other, in its endowments whether of wisdom or of righteousness or anything else, far away and for ever behind us.

Paul had been specially gifted of God to be a witness of the worthlessness of man or of the flesh in its best estate. For if any other might have had confidence in it, he more, as he tells us. (Phil. iii.) But his renunciation of it exposes its utter vanity, as being the act of one who had made the fairest and most flattering attainments in it.

And it is faith alone that does this. That's the transcendent excellency of faith, doing what nothing else can do. Love is exalted among the virtues to the chief place. (1 Cor. xiii.) But faith does what it was never committed to love to do. It is that which lays hold on the salvation of the sinner. And till we get to God, our best thing only keeps us the further from Him. Paul's zeal, a good thing in the flesh, led him to persecute the Church. The wisdom of the *princes* of this world led them into darkness and ignorance of the mystery of God. (1 Cor. ii.) They were princes, it is true, the most exalted of their generation, but they were princes of *the world*; and therefore their being princes there, only strengthened them against the Lord of the true glory. For with such the world is the object, with God the world is judged

Returning, however, for another moment, to our Evangelist, I might observe, that in the midst of all this teaching on self-renunciation, in the case of the publican, the little child and the young ruler, the great Teacher Himself practises His own lesson. Jesus renounces Himself. "Why callest thou me good—there is none good but one, that is, God." He was good, but He would not look on His goodness. This was self-renouncing. What He renounces bespeaks

His personal and moral glory ; what we have to renounce betrays our shame and pravity ; but still He practises the lesson He teaches, and goes before as our pattern. We have this again shewn us by the Apostle, in Phil. ii. There he presents the Lord Jesus emptying Himself. It was, surely, of that which was infinitely or divinely glorious ; but still He emptied Himself ; and upon this he exhorts us to empty ourselves of all spirit of strife and vainglory. Thus there is sympathy ; but such sympathy, as, while He and we are found exercising ourselves—to speak in this manner—in the same lessons, yet does it bespeak His perfectness in everything, and our state of dishonour. So that we may assert the sympathy, but by that be only speaking to His praise and our own shame. And when our *oneness* with Him is declared by the Apostle, the same is made to appear, for though one, He is the *Sanctifier*, and we the *sanctified* (Heb. ii. 11), characters which tell out clearly and loudly the infinite moral distance that there is *personally* between us, though thus *one in the purpose of God*.

· May the gracious hand that has redeemed us as sinners, beloved, still lead us safely onward as saints ; and the good Shepherd who once laid down His life for us, feed us in the pastures of His holy word for His name sake !

31—43.—In this portion of our Gospel, which I separate to itself, there is nothing, perhaps, characteristic. The Lord here, as in the corresponding

places in both Matthew and Mark, addresses Himself to His journey, in the full anticipation of the sorrows and death in which it was shortly to end.

But there is in Him, all through this journey, the expression of a greatness of soul that is perfectly blessed and wonderful. He has Jerusalem, and His cup of sorrow there, full before Him ; He finds no sympathy from those who were His own ; He gathers no admiration from the world ; it is the cross, and the shame of it too, that He is called to sustain, all human countenance and support being denied Him ; and yet He goes on without the least possible abatement of His energy in thoughts and services for others. We deem ourselves entitled to think of ourselves, when trouble comes upon us, and to expect that others will think of us also. But this perfect Sufferer was thoughtful of others, as He was going onward, though every step of His way only conducted Him to still deeper sorrows ; and He had reason to judge that not one step of it all would, in return, be cheered by man.

For even His own little band understand not the sorrows about which He was speaking to them.

And here let me observe, that while, through this Gospel, we have been noticing our Lord as the Teacher, dealing with the thoughts, the hearts, and the consciences of men, we cannot but have observed the great ignorance of scripture, which even the Apostles themselves betray continually. It does not appear that it was acquaintance with the prophets which had beforehand prepared them for the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, nor afterwards, in their intercourse with Him, do they seem to grow into knowledge. They

wonder at one thing after another which He was constantly either doing or saying, though all was "according to the scriptures," or "that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Their *hearts*, as Lydia's afterwards, had been opened. The attractions that were in Jesus had entered, and separated them from their fishing nets and kinsfolk and publicans' tables. So their *consciencences*, more or less, like Peter's, may have been visited by a convicting ray of His glory. But their *understandings* had remained but little affected.

That grace and blessing, however, comes in due season. After He rose from the dead, when all the comforts of His own personal intercourse with them were about to cease, then "opened He their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 45); and the first chapter of the Acts, before the Holy Ghost was given, affords a sample of the fruit of this new endowment, this opened understanding to understand the scripture. And great comfort all this was in the increasing sorrow and darkness of their condition. Their Lord had gone, and the enemy was still alive and in power, therefore the light of God now began to shed its beams on opened eyes, that thus by nothing less than God's light, they might walk through the world's darkness. Their gracious Teacher was personally withdrawn, and their understandings are, accordingly, opened to know the treasures, the comforts, and the strengthenings, of His word.

But as yet it was not so, as we gather from this passage. The Lord addresses Himself to His journey,

in the anticipation of the sorrow and shame in which it was to end, but He gets no sympathy from those who had been His care and the objects of His teaching. "Uncheered by earthly smiles," we may surely say, His lonely journey was.

We are, however, to witness refreshment and cheer for His spirit, provided by the unseen hand of the Father. For that hand draws a few poor sinners to Him, and, under that power (John vi. 44), they come in faith to Him, as He now repairs to that *guilty* city, where all the prophets had perished. He has not to spend any toil of His own upon them. This beautifully distinguishes these cases. They are got ready for His enjoyment, as by the teaching and drawing of the Father in secret and alone. And as the joy of a harvest they are brought to Jesus in these dark and lonely hours; the blind beggar, whose faith we see here, Zaccheus, who meets Him in the next stage of the way, and the dying Thief who calls on Him just at the end of the way. These are His good cheer during His journey. They had cost Him no care or toil, as those who were daily His companions had. He was not tried by the slowness of their hearts, or the dimness of their faith, but they were as the joy of harvest to the reaper.

The strong decision and intelligence of faith which appear in these cases are exceedingly blessed. The blind Beggar, whom we have here, is not to be put off by the religious ceremoniousness of the multitude who would not have "Jesus of Nazareth" intruded on, but he urges his case on the ear and heart of "Jesus the Son of David." Here was faith in its decisiveness and intelligence. He knew what and who Jesus was.

And Jesus owns the good cheer and refreshment which this faith yields Him. For He stands at once at the bidding of this faith, and entirely commits Himself to it, saying to the poor man, "what wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?"

Thus did the God of grace cheer the way of this toiling, travelling Minister of grace. What will His satisfaction be, when He sees of the full travail of His soul!

XIX. XX.—The stages of the Lord's journey are here very distinctly marked. He is seen, as in the preceding chapter, approaching Jericho, and now passing through it. Then on his road from Jericho to Jerusalem, just outside of which He pauses for a moment, and then formally enters it. And here, as also in Matthew and Mark, the closing scenes in the trial and conviction of the city are also very exactly noticed, this being the subject of these two chapters, like Matt. xxi.—xxiii. and Mark xi., xii.

But they have their peculiarities. The conversion of Zaccheus, a little narrative that strikingly exhibits the work of God in the soul of man, is peculiar to St. Luke. And the parable of the talents, or of the nobleman who went into the far country, here follows that little narrative, though given by St. Matthew in another connection; for here, these two scenes are made to illustrate the several purpose of the first and second coming of the Lord, it being the way of the Spirit in our Evangelist, as I have noticed, so to combine circumstances and matters of instruction together, that

moral ends may be answered to the heart and conscience, and that principles and truths of the kingdom may stand illustrated before us. But the parable of the Marriage of the king's son is omitted here, being introduced more suitably with the design of the Gospel, in the xivth chapter. For there it takes a general or *moral* character ; whereas, had it been introduced here it would have had a stricter application to the Jews. So, the curse on the barren fig-tree is not here, nor is the sentence on Jerusalem largely and fully pronounced.*

Zaccheus, as I observed on the preceding meditation, (p. 121,) was one of the refreshments provided, through the grace of the Father, for the wearied soul of Christ, as He was travelling His present way to the city. And the Lord owns this refreshment ; for He says of the conversion of this publican, that it was answering the purpose of His coming ; and, therefore, He must have tasted in it something of the fruit of the travail of His soul. The character of this conversion is simple and comforting. The boldness of faith is remarkable here, as in the preceding case ; Zaccheus being deaf to the injurious observations of the *righteous or*

* I have observed throughout these meditations, (as well as here, concerning the parable of the Talents or Ten Pounds,) that Luke does not strictly observe circumstances and sayings in order of time, because his purpose is *moral*. In Ps. cv. and cvi. we may observe just the same. The purpose of the Spirit there being *moral* and not *historical* ; (that is, to vindicate Jehovah in His dealings with Israel, and to convict Israel in their dealings with Jehovah) ; the Psalmist does not give the events, to which he refers, in their succession or order of time. He speaks of the plague of darkness before that of flies, and of Korah's rebellion before the making of the Golden Calf. This is precisely according to what strikes the mind in our Evangelist.

moral world, as the poor blind beggar had been to its *religious formality and reserve*. And the fruit of communion with Christ, in the place where He was giving the convicted sinner the pledges of His favour, is brought forth very fresh and abundant.

The parable which follows this happy history, as we see plainly, and as I have shortly noticed above, illustrates the great end of the Lord's second coming. The prophets had not distinguished the two comings so clearly. Thoughts both of *grace* and *glory* arise at once and together from what they say of the advent of Messiah. Isaiah lxi., to which our Evangelist has already led us (see chap. iv.), instances this. The grace, the vengeance, and the kingdom, appear there in unbroken order and succession. So, the songs and prophetic words, which attended the birth of Jesus in this gospel, rehearse the same. (See chap. i., ii.) But the need of two advents comes out *formally* upon the unbelief of Israel, and their rejection of their king. I say, *formally*, because of course, "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the creation." And the history of Christ, under the figure of "the stone," to which allusion is here made, gives us these two advents exactly on this principle, and the consequent vengeance which is now to accompany the second.

Jesus enters the city in royal state. The fifth period of our Gospel begins with this action (see p. 9). The multitude take the tone of the occasion, and by their welcome, and their palm-branches, and their exultation, fill out the scene of this kingly procession. The shout of a king is among them. But the question still was, would Zion rejoice? would the children of

Israel be joyful in their king? would Jerusalem be glad because He was coming, meek and lowly, and riding upon an ass? (Zech. ix. 4.)

This was the inquisition now held. And we know the answer. In one language or another, all the evangelists give it. "Ye would not," is said to the children of Jerusalem. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," is again the word upon Israel. And the whole course of the action here recorded gives the same answer. Jerusalem—that "favoured seat of God on earth, that heaven below the sky"—had defiled itself. The temple is unclean, the elders of the people are unbelieving, hypocrisy and the love of the world stained the priests and scribes and rulers; they challenged instead of accepting Jesus; and traps and snares are laid for His feet, where the crown should have been prepared for His head.

The action of these chapters, in this way, joins in the universal testimony against Jerusalem; and Jesus has to weep over that "city of peace." It had, of old, been His desire. "This is my rest," He had said of it. And as the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, He seeks no relief from other cities here, but weeps over this faithless one. And till Jerusalem be restored, the earth from one end of it to the other is a Bochim to the spirit of Jesus in His saints. Their joy is divine and heavenly till then, for the earth yields it not to them, if Jerusalem be disobedient.

It is very blessed to see that the place which the Lord chose for His dwelling on earth, was Salem, the city of peace. There, in very early time, His holy witness and minister shewed Himself. (Gen. xiv.) And

so, when He Himself really descended to the earth, He came as "the prince of peace," seeking Jerusalem, His heralds proclaiming "peace on earth." (Luke ii.) But man was not ready for this. Man had previously built "a city of confusion" (Gen. xi.), and builders of Babel could scarcely be prepared for a king of Salem. "The son of peace" was not on earth to answer the salutation of "the prince of peace" from heaven. Jerusalem, in her day, knew not the things that belonged to her peace. He had, therefore, as we see here, only to weep over her. Her citizens had refused him, had said He should not reign over them, and He has to return to the "far country" (the supreme seat and source of all power) to get His title to the kingdom sealed afresh.

All this however, tells us, that when He returns, it must be in a new character. His return will be in "a day of vengeance," seeing that this visitation in "peace" was refused. And as promising Him this day of vengeance on the citizens, the Lord says to Him, on reaching that "far country," "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." The Stone that was first offered as a foundation stone, sure and precious, was disallowed by the builders, and therefore now, ere it can reach its destined place and honour, that is, fill, like a great mountain, the whole earth, it must first smite the image. The kingdom that is to be taken by the returned nobleman, is first to have all things that offend taken out of it. The unbelief and rebellion of man have thus shaped the course of the Lord of heaven and earth, and he has now to travel

up to His glory and kingdom through "a day of vengeance."*

But He will (let the earth be for awhile never so angry) still take the city of peace for His dwelling, and Salem shall still be true to her name. As He says by His prophet Haggai, "and in this place will I give peace." For that alone is *his* "strong city" (Is. xxvi.), and its walls will be salvation, and its gates praise. Man's "strong city" will then have been made a ruin. (Ps. cviii., Is. xxvi.) The day of vengeance will have accomplished that, for the city of confusion and the city of peace cannot stand together. And when He has thus, on the overthrow of man's confusion, established His own peace, the earth will learn to answer the salutation of heaven, and to say, "peace in heaven," of which the acclamations here give us the pledge and sample (See chap. ii. 14., xix. 38).

It is easy to apprehend this, and the course of these two chapters presents it all to us very simply. Jerusalem being unprepared for Jesus of Nazareth, accounts for the need of two advents, and for the nobleman returning in a day of vengeance. But we may remark that in the midst of all this, denied as He was every thing for the present by the sons of men, still does He act in the consciousness of His Lordship of every thing. He claims the ass from the very owner of it, because He could say, speaking of Himself, "the Lord hath need of him." And it is very striking, that in the course of His life and minis-

* This day of vengeance is to be on the Gentiles as well as on Israel, on "all nations" (Is. xxxiv., lxiii.); for Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, as well as Herod with the Jews, really rejected the chief corner stone (Acts iv. 27).

try, though He was the rejected Galilean all the time, there was no form of the ancient glory that He did not assume. I have before observed (page 23), how faith at times drew aside the veil and disclosed His glory. But now I ask what glory!—all glories of Jehovah known and recorded of old, all glories which had taught Israel that their God was the one only Lord of heaven and earth. Thus; He healed leprosy, the well-known peculiar honour of God (2 Kings v. 7); He put away all sicknesses, as the ancient Jehovah-roph of Israel (Ex. xv. 26); He fed the multitudes in wildernesses again; He stilled the waves, as though He could again divide Jordan and the Red sea; and He made the fish to bring Him tribute, as here He claims the ass, treating the earth and its fulness as all His own. The judicial glory of Jehovah He would also fill, when the occasion demanded it, pronouncing woe on the people, or leaving the city for desolation, as, of old, He had again and again judged and chastened His people both in the wilderness and in Canaan. All the ancient forms of praise and honour known in Jehovah to Israel, He would thus put on; the Redeemer, the leader, the healer, the feeder, and the judge too, of His people. And as led forth by the faith of a Gentile, He could shew Himself one with Him who, at the beginning, *by His word* had made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them. (chap. vii.)

It may well be a happy service to gather up these fragments of His glory in the midst of His humiliation. But I may further observe, that the two parables, which we listen to in the course of this action, bear us very much through the whole of the divine dispensations.

That of the "labourers in the vineyard," gives us the dealings of God with Israel, from the day when they were planted as His people in Canaan, to the time of the mission and rejection of Christ, "the Heir of the vineyard." That of the "Ten Pounds," takes the divine economy up from that moment, and carries us through the present age, until the second coming or kingdom of Christ. And in each of them, we read of the Lord going into "a far country" (xix. 12., xx. 9). The Lord of Israel did this. After He had left His people in their inheritance in the days of Joshua, He withdrew, in some sense, expecting that they would till the land He had given them, for His praise and profit in the earth. But their history and this parable tell us the full disappointment of all such hopes. So Christ, the rejected Heir of the Jewish vineyard, has done this. Upon His rejection He went into the same "far country" (heaven), leaving not an earthly portion behind Him to the care of Jewish labourers, but talents, opportunities of serving Him, with His servants, under the promise of His return in the full title of the kingdom, then and there to reward them. And the parable, as well as the history of our present age, tell us, or will tell us, the end of this. A very full view, after this manner, of God's great plans, these parables give, coming out here in the most artless and natural way, in the course of this action.

But is not that a tender thought which is suggested here—that the saints are, in this age, left to serve their Master in a place, where, after fullest deliberation, He has been cast out and refused? The *citizens* of it have said they will not have Him; and service, therefore,

to be fully of right character, should be rendered in the recollection of this rejection.

And again ; if we thus learn the *nature* of service from this parable generally, from the history of the "unprofitable servant," we learn the *spring* of service. That man did not know *grace* ; he *feared* ; he judged Christ an *austere* man ; his best calculation was to come off free in the day of reckoning ; the bondage of the law filled his heart, and not the liberty of the truth. He was not a Zaccheus, who bore away in his soul, from the joy of communion with Jesus and the certainty of His love, a readiness to give half his goods to the poor, and a purpose to restore to any he had wronged, even more than the demands of the law exacted. He was no servant. He served himself, and not Christ. And so does every one who does not begin with knowing that Christ has first served them, and that their's is to be the service of grateful love.—Grateful love!—how happy the thought ! Paul served in this spirit. The life that he lived, he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him. Grateful love, in the sense of forgiveness sealed and made sure to his soul, accounts (under the Spirit, surely) for fruitfulness in Paul ; the want of that, ignorance and disesteem of it in the unprofitable servant, accounts for his barrenness.

XXI.—Thus have we seen it, the Lord of Israel, the Lord of the earth and its fulness, rejected by its citizens ; and He, who once visited them with a day of

peace, taking His seat at the right hand of power, waiting to visit them with a day of judgment (xx. 42). This was the bearing of the preceding chapter, and this present one shews us more fully all the results to Israel and Jerusalem of this rejection of their King ; that is, the times of the Gentiles, the season of Jerusalem's depression, with the close of those times in the return of the Son of man.

This chapter corresponds, in its general purpose, with Matt. xxiv., xxv., and Mark xiii. But, among other distinctions, we may observe the little circumstance which opens it. And it is very peculiarly in the way of our Evangelist.

This poor widow stands in contrast with the nation generally. Our Lord gives her this place. At least in contrast with those who may be judged a sample of the nation in its worldly wealth and religious self-importance. And as the Lord of Israel here looks at these two together, so had the prophets of Israel before Him. They see the nation in apostacy, and the remnant in the midst of it. Like the two at the mill, or in the field, as we have already seen. For, in the last days when the things of Israel become the subject of divine notice again, these two will again be manifested.

It was easy for the blessed Lord to pass from the rich benefactors in this scene, to the widow with her two mites. We know His mind too well to think that it could have been otherwise. His spirit in His prophet (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2) shews a wonderful thing somewhat similar to this. He sees the contrite and broken-hearted man, and turns to such, rather than to all the gorgeous works of His own hand. The heavens

and the earth are and were and shall be both His delight and His glory, but "to this man" will He rather look. The deepest affections are stirred there.

What comfort is this! And how easily do our own affections understand it! For that which *sympathises with our mind or taste*, is really nearer to us than that which *serves our interest*. The one who abroad, in the affairs of life, promotes our advantages, is not so near to our hearts, as the one who can sit with us and enter into the enjoyments of our mind and taste. And so with our God. That which secures His glory, like the heavens and the earth, is passed by for the poor humbled sinner that trembles at His word. There the divine mind meets its fonder object.

Who would have it otherwise! But who can measure the consolation that comes to us from this!

It has often been observed, with what propriety the Lord, when quoting Isaiah lxi., breaks off with the words, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (lxi. 19, 20); because the words which immediately follow in the prophet being, "and the day of vengeance of our God," the Lord could not, of them as of the preceding words, say, "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," His ministry being one of grace and not of judgment to Israel. But now, in this chapter, the Lord, as it were, continues His quotation from the prophet, and goes on to reveal "the day of vengeance," in order, as He tells us in verse 22, "that *all* things (not *some* merely as before) which are written may be fulfilled."

This day of vengeance upon Israel as a nation extends, in some sense, all through this present "times

of the Gentiles." The crisis in the latter day is the character of the whole period. They are all "*days of vengeance*," as the Lord here calls them, though there is to be a special season and visitation at the close—"the *day of vengeance*," as the prophet calls it. (Is. xxxiv., lxiii.) And it is the whole period which our Lord here, I judge, (rather than in the corresponding chapters in Matthew or Mark) gives us to look at—that dreary and evil season, the portion of Jerusalem during "the days of vengeance," or "the times of the Gentiles." And accordingly, instead of pointing at "the abomination of desolation" (as is done in Matthew and Mark, and by which is described the *last enemy of Jerusalem*), our Evangelist has the more general expression, "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies;" introducing "all the trees," in the parable, in connection with "the fig-tree"—these being still further marks of the more *general* character of his Gospel, and of the more extended view of Jerusalem's sorrows, which the Lord is here taking. Indeed it is only St. Luke who has the expression, "the times of the Gentiles."

And this being so, the Lord here looking through the long vista of all Jerusalem's griefs, the strong impression left on the mind, after reading this chapter, is this—that the Lord's great purpose was, to guard His saints against the thought, that the kingdom of Israel was to be entered *at once* or *in quietness*. He tells them that they were to count on no such things at all, for that before the kingdom could arise, there were to be judgments and sorrows. "The time draweth near," some would say; "I am Christ," others would

say ; or the same seducer might utter both (v. 8) ; but the Lord here warns His disciples against seductions. The citizens had already hated their offered King ; and as enemies they must be slain, ere the kingdom could fully appear. And to leave on their hearts the clear and full impression of all this, so that they might stand in an evil day, and not be seduced by any prophet of peace, was the great purpose of the Lord in this discourse with them.

I believe that Daniel, in like manner, looks through the whole time, "the times of the Gentiles," as being one and the same in character, and calls it "the war" (ix. 26). The end, it is true, will be special, and will be manifested "with a flood," as he speaks ; but the whole is a war, and desolations are determined, till that which is also determined be poured upon the desolater.

But it is very significant, that while Matthew or Mark give us more particularly the last great Jewish sorrow, or "Jacob's trouble," and Luke more widely the whole age of "the times of the Gentiles," John does not notice this remarkable prophecy at all. The Lord's solemn entry as the King into Jerusalem goes off quite in another direction from what it does in either of the previous Gospels. The Greeks, representing the attendant and obedient nations in the latter day, come desiring to see Him, and this leads Him out at once to prospects of the distant kingdom. His soul then passes through a trouble ; and shortly afterwards He forebodes, not the judgment of Israel, according to this prophecy, but the judgment of the world and of the prince of the world. And at length, in the riches of His grace as Saviour of the world, the Son of the

Father (which He is in that Gospel), He tells of Himself being lifted up on the cross, and of His being the light of the world, and the one who spoke according to that commandment which the Father had given Him, and which is life everlasting. (See John xii.)

This is all strikingly characteristic of the four Gospels, and aids the conclusion that this prophecy, not found in John, is about *Jewish* matters, and connected with the return of "the Son of man" to the earth. For that is not the Church's prospect. The saints now wait for the descent of "the Son of God" from heaven to the air. (1 Thess. i., iv.) It is the Jewish election, who, by and bye, will have to wait for the days of the Son of man.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah are the proper utterances of the heart, in sympathy with Jerusalem and her children all through these times of the Gentiles. The city still sits solitary. The mountain of Zion is still desolate. The crown is fallen, and the joy of the heart is gone. The punishment of iniquity is not yet accomplished in that land and among that people. Rachel still weeps. But the Lord will not cast off for ever (Lam. iii. 31), and Rachel has been told this,—
"refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy" (Jer. xxxi. 16).

But there is another expression, also peculiar to our Gospel, which happily leads to other prospects. Speaking of the consummation of these Jewish sorrows, the Lord says, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, *for your redemption draweth nigh.*"

To say "the time draweth nigh," as we have seen, before any trouble could come, would be deceit; but now, when the day of vengeance is at its height, to say "your redemption draweth nigh," would be holy and seasonable comfort to the faithful. And, in like manner, the prophets connect "the day of vengeance" with the "year of my redeemed," as the Lord here does (Is. lxiii. 4). Judgment on the apostate nation, deliverance and joy to the remnant, are both to be looked for. For though the Lord make a full end of all nations, yet will he not make a full end of Israel. The promised "times of the restitution of all things," will surely follow the threatened "times of the Gentiles." And those promised times of restitution, called here by the Lord "your redemption," will be the true Jewish or earthly jubilee, which pre-eminently was the time of restitution or redemption. (See Lev. xxv.)

In Israel, the land and the people both belonged to the Lord, and in the year of jubilee, He dealt with them as His own. For forty-nine years He allowed confusion to prevail. Lands might be sold, and the people themselves go to the creditor. But this was to be only for a season, for God's claim was paramount, and every fiftieth year He would assert it. Israelite might traffic with Israelite, and corrupt the primitive order, or *God's* world, making the whole system *man's* world; but all this corruption and disturbance was to have an end, and this end came in the returning year of jubilee. Then the Lord arose, as it were, to act on His own principles, and assert His own rights; to undo all the mischief which man's trafficking had introduced, and to replant the land and the people ac-

ording to their beginnings under his own hand. His hand was then uppermost, and His order and purpose would shew themselves openly. And what joy is it to see this, that the moment we get things again under *God's* hand, the moment we find ourselves in *His* world, it is a jubilee we are keeping, a season of joy, a time for the restorations of grace, a time for making a happy return, every one to his family, and every one to his possession.

How blessed (to speak according to the figure or symbol of this ordinance) thus to have the Lord, the Landlord of the earth again. "Happy are the people that are in such a case." And this jubilee was introduced by the day of atonement (ver. 9). That was the day that was to open the millennial age. For it is nothing but the work of the Lamb of God that can lead to any joy or deliverance among us. The precious blood is all our title. And thus it is that the jubilee and redemption are connected; so that when the Lord here says, "your redemption draweth nigh," it was as looking out to this jubilee of Israel and the earth. The jubilee was *God's redemption* of His land and people. Supposing that no kinsman could be found able or willing to do this previously, God Himself, in the fiftieth year, would exercise both His rights and His resources in behalf of His oppressed land and bondaged people. And thus this jubilee was "the year of my redeemed," as spake the Lord by the prophet, or the season of "redemption," towards which the eyes of the expectant suffering remnant are here directed by their blessed Master.*

* Every seventh year in Israel, property was common (Lev.

We learn, then, that "these things will come to pass;" these days of vengeance, these times of the Gentiles, will run their course, but "redemption" is to be behind them all. The smoking furnace will pass first, because the Lord's rights and claims have been denied by the rebellious citizens of this world, because there was no "son of peace" in man's "city of confusion;" but, as surely, the burning lamp will follow. A cry from the citizens that they would not have Him followed the Lord, and on His return He must therefore visit them in His sore displeasure, ere He proclaim the jubilee. But the jubilee waits, to crown and close the work.

This is food for *hope*; and God is the God of hope. To be without hope is to be without God (Eph. ii. 12). We cannot have faith without having hope. Because—the truth we believe is *God's* truth, and God, being Love, will not reveal truth to us without making that truth of such a character as will inspire hope in us. He must give this shape to His revelations. He who called Israel *out of Egypt*, called them *into Canaan*. And so with us; "being justified—we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2).

This is most sure. God is the God of hope as well as of salvation. But the style of this chapter suggests, what has struck me generally throughout scripture, that the food which hope gets in scripture is comparatively little—rich indeed, but small in quantity. This, however, is only a further witness of the per-
xxv. 6). It was a little sample or pledge of the jubilee. And such, I judge, was the state of things in the infant Church at Jerusalem,—all things were common then; a similar pledge and sample. (Acts ii., iv.)

fection of the divine oracles. Because *God Himself* is our present lesson. We are called to learn *Him* first, and then the inheritance or glory He has to give. And this is so right. For when we thoroughly know the excellence or goodness of a person, we can easily assure ourselves that we shall be no losers by him. His character warrants our hope, and is the security of our expectations. Nay, we wrong Him, if we do not hope from Him. Had man, however, been the author of the scriptures, they would have been very different from this. They would have been filled with descriptions of the promised joy. Just as touching the life and character of Christ. Had man been the author of such a history, he would have dealt largely in description and encomium. But the way of those who have spoken of Him under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is just the very opposite. So, as to our prospects.

Look at Job's history. Long account we get of his sorrows and the exercise of his faith, but the joy and honour in which all those sorrows resulted are given us in one chapter. Bright, to be sure, is the exhibition there of his final condition, but comparatively small and soon disposed of. And in this manner, generally, the testimonies of God give us large and repeated account of the evil of this world, and of our consequent trial of faith in it, but feed the hopes of our hearts more sparingly. For, as I suggested before, it is rather *Himself* we are to know now, and on *Himself* to feed now.

Our present chapter is after this pattern. We have sorrow and trial occupying the scene largely, but the prospect at the end presented shortly, and soon filled.

up—"lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh."*

XXII., XXIII.—These chapters find their likeness, to a general intent, in **Matt. xxvi., xxvii.,** and in **Mark xiv., xv.** But still, as ever, there are distinctive marks and notices.

In the opening of these solemn scenes, the Spirit, in **St. Luke,** accounts for the act of **Judas,** as He does afterwards for the denial of **Peter,** by disclosing **Satan** as the source of both. Neither **Matthew** nor **Mark** do this; but **John** does it even with more exactness, noting the progress of the power of **Satan** over the traitor. And these distinctions are quite according to the mind of the Spirit in the different Gospels. **Matthew** and **Mark** do not touch the secret spring of wickedness, for it had not been much noticed in **Israel;** **Luke** does, for he was looking out to larger and deeper principles of truth; and **John** still more fully, because he reaches still further into **God** and spiritual power than any of them. And this might again give us some recollections of **Job;** for in his history, the source of the trials of the saints is strikingly opened also, the accuser there appearing before **God** against the righteous man, as

* There are differences of judgment as to things connected with this, and the time of the promised return of **Jesus.** But I take pleasure in joining with one who says, "if we have not learnt to value that promise, on account of the blessedness it presents, on account of its unfailing certainty, and for the sake of **Him** who gave it, but instead of this, have been induced only to estimate its worth according to our own thoughts of its immediate fulfilment, or of its fulfilment during our natural life time, it is evident that we estimate and hold the promise unscripturally."—Very sure and seasonable, this is.

here he is shewn desiring to sift the disciples like wheat. But here, the sources of security are also opened, the Lord saying, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This we had not in Job.

Again : I observe that the words with which the Lord seats Himself at the paschal table ; the inquiry among the disciples at such a moment as this, which of them should be the greatest, and the marvellous grace of the Lord's reply ; the notice about buying a sword, or of the militant state into which the disciples were now to count on entering ; the healing of the wounded ear ; the look at Peter ; and the reconciliation between Pilate and Herod ; all these are peculiar to St. Luke, and quite of the character of his Gospel, giving us the exercise of His grace, and also the workings and affections of nature in others.

So, as we advance still further, it is here only that we see the affections of "the daughters of Jerusalem,"—a sight quite within the Spirit's proper vision in Luke. And this company of women hold a very peculiar place. They do not take part with the crucifiers, but at the same time they are not of one rank with "the women of Galilee," who, as disciples, left their distant homes and kindred to follow Jesus. They melt, as with human affections, at the sight of His sorrows, and return from it smiting their breasts. but they do not appear to receive Him as the hope of their own souls, or of the nation. And yet, in all grace, He appears to receive them as a sample of the righteous remnant in the latter day. But indeed, dear brethren, we may say, in connection with this little incident, that one feels too sadly in their own hearts, that

it is one thing to render Jesus the tribute of admiration, or even of tears, and another to join one's self with him for better or for worse, through good and through evil, in the face of this present world; one thing to speak well of Him, another to give up all for Him.

In like manner, it is only our Evangelist who gives our Lord's desire for Israel on the cross.—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And so (as is well known among us), it is only here that the repentance and faith of one of the malefactors is recorded. And suited characteristic expressions of grace these are. For, as the exercises of the human heart are especially called forth in this Gospel, so are the ways of that divine goodness, which had all their utterance and current, in the midst of us, through the Son of God's love. It abounds in discoveries of man; but so does it in the gracious actings of the Lord; that the evil and the darkness of the one, may find its blessed remedy in God Himself through the other.

This conversion of the dying malefactor was further refreshment for the heart of Jesus, in these dark and lonely hours, as we observed on the case of the poor blind Beggar and of Zaccheus the publican. His faith, like theirs, was truly precious. What a *ready* Teacher the Spirit was to him! In the twinkling of an eye (to speak so) the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ sprang forth in his soul! He understands himself in his guilt and just desert of judgment—he understands Jesus in His faultlessness, and right possession of a kingdom! And he learns, in his conscience, that his only refuge, is to pass

over from his own state of guilt and exposure into the shelter and glory of Christ!

There was no fruit in this poor soul, it has been said. He never did any thing for Christ. But where, we may ask, is such fruit to God as faith itself. There is no fruit of faith that glorifies God as faith itself does, faith in the Gospel, in the sufficiency and worthiness of Christ. Because, it receives a revelation which exalts and sets off every thing that can be God's praise. It admits a report or declaration about the blessed One, which magnifies all the divine excellencies, and every thing that is worthy of Himself.

And this is His own purpose in it. As the Apostle says, "that He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. ii. 7). This is His purpose. To display Himself; to let it be known abroad, through all His creation, who He is and what He is, and thus make His own works again, but more gloriously than of old, utter His praise. And how blessedly was this purpose answered in the soul of this dying thief; and how is it to this day answered in the history of this glorious conversion! May we never with some, stand to inquire about the fruit of faith in him, but read in his story the purpose of God in the Gospel of His dear Son, to tell out His own doings "to the praise of the glory of His grace" for ever. But this, only as we pass by this little history which is peculiar to Luke.

So, though they are but slight additions, St. Luke is the only one, who calls Golgotha by its Greek or Gentile name, Calvary; and while in Matthew or Mark, the Centurion's testimony is given to Jesus as "the Son of God," here, it is to Jesus as "a righteous man.

But beyond all that strikes me as characteristic in these chapters, is, that other utterance of the Lord on the cross—"Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit." This is peculiar, and shews us that the Lord's mind, while passing through his last hours, is not given to us in the same path in the different Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, we have the cry of conscious desertion.—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"—the cry of the bruised and smitten lamb. In John, He passes on without reference to God or the Father at all, but simply, with His own hand sealing the accomplished work in the words, "It is finished." But here, it is between these paths that His soul is kept. It is not the sense of desertion, and its due attendant, appeal to God; nor is it the sense of divine personal authority; but it is communion with *the Father*, the utterance of a soul that depended on Him, and was sure of His support and acceptance. And this is quite according to our Gospel. It is that central path, so to speak, which the mind of the Lord has been taking all through it. It is *God* as absent from Him, that He feels in Matthew or Mark; *the Father* as with Him, that He knows here; *Himself* that he is divinely conscious of in John. All these thoughts had their wondrous and holy course through the soul of the Lord in these hours. Perfect in every exercise of heart, though various; and none could trace them thus, by the pen of one evangelist after another, but the Spirit that awakened them.—"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then *thou* knewest my path."

By this cry, the independent life of the Spirit is fully and formally owned. The Lord, in dying, com-

mends "His spirit" to the Father. Stephen afterwards, in dying, commends his to Jesus. A happy witness to us, that both the Lord and His servant looked for something prior to, and independent of, the body. They looked to a condition of *the spirit*. This was not what the dying thief looked for, but what, through surpassing grace, he got. As a Jew, he looked for a future kingdom, but his dying Lord promises him present life with Himself in paradise. For "life" as well as "immortality" (incorruption of the body) are brought to light through the Gospel. (2 Tim. i.)

Death bounds the empire of sin and Satan.—Sin reigns unto death. The judgment that follows death belongs to God. The enemy may follow up to that point, but he goes no further. Pharaoh might pursue to the Red Sea, or the king of Jericho's messengers might search through the mountains which lay on his side of the Jordan, but beyond the two rivers, the two kings had no title to go a step. Let the river be passed, and Joshua's men were within the influence of the camp of the saints. And let death be passed, it may not be glory, but it is the precincts of the kingdom that we reach.

"This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," was the word here, to one who was then just passing the gate of death. The kingdom that he looked for, and of which he spoke, was not yet ; but the gracious hand of Christ was alone entitled to lead him, and though it will not lead directly and at once into the promised land, where the tribes of the Lord are to share their desired and abiding inheritances, yet it will lead in paths worthy of itself, paths of light and life, for He

is the God of the living only, and in Him is no darkness at all. God is the "Father of spirits," and the ghost given up, or death past, we are alone with the living God. The spirit returns to Him who gave it, and it is said to us, "fear not them that kill the body, *and after that have no more that they can do.*"

Have we not the fullest testimony that it was so with the Lord? Did not the rent rocks, the opened grave, and the riven veil, tell that He was Conqueror on the other side of death, that He was in the power of the hand of God, and that death had no more dominion over Him?—"In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And we may trust the single hand that meets us there also. It may lead to paradise first, and not to the kingdom till the resurrection, but every path will be according to the hand that opens it. It was to lead the dying thief that day—but where but to paradise, the place where Paul had such visions and revelations, as he could not utter when he returned to earth? And into that paradise, a dying *malefactor* and the dying *Lord of life and glory* (wondrous company) were to go that day.

Paul counted it better to depart and be with Christ. He had, in some sense, already experienced paradise. (2 Cor. xii.) It may have been by a surprise that he was taken there. He had no time, it is likely, to prepare himself for such a journey; and an untried journey, an untravelled road, it was to him. But there was a hand that could conduct the spirit without amazement. And so with us. We hear of the sudden, unexpected death of saints. But He who is principal in the scene, and who holds the keys of hell and death, cannot be

surprised. And, therefore, though we learn from the Apostle that the visions and audiences which he got there filled him with his only occasion for glorying, they were so exalted, yet never does he intimate that they were too big, or too high, for him. His spirit was attempered to them, for the One who had prepared the scenes in the third heavens for him, had, in the same moment, got him ready for them.

He that hath wrought us for the resurrection in glorious bodies, is none less than God Himself, and He has given to us the earnest of the Spirit ; “therefore we are always confident, knowing, that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord—we are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. v.)

And our meeting death (entrance to this paradise, as it is to us), is altogether different from Christ’s meeting it. We have to find God *for* us, and not *against* us, in it—on our side against the enemy. We are to meet it as any pain or trouble in the flesh, the enemy using them all for our mischief, if he may, but God bringing blessing and praise. No three hours of darkness is there before us, but the sense of a love that is stronger than death. But He had to know that time at the hour of the power of darkness, as He speaks in this Gospel. And He had to know the full righteous exaction of that penalty (of old incurred by us), “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.” That was the cup He drank—the bitter cup, tasted at Gethsemane, and exhausted at Calvary. Blessed for us who love Him to know, as He speaks in the book of Psalms, that “the cup of salvation” is also His. And He will

take it, by and bye, in the kingdom, leading the praises of the congregation in the sanctuary of glory.

And a thought full of joy (had we but hearts for it) arises here, that every thing is heightened and honoured by the hand of the Son of God. Every thing that has been spoiled and broken by us is taken up by Him, and, in His hand, raised to a character which we could never have given it. The law broken by us has been magnified and made honourable by Him ; all human grace, all fruit of human soil (as we see especially in this Gospel), has been presented to God by Him, and in Him, more fresh and lovely than we could ever have offered it ; all service has been rendered to perfection, and all victory gained gloriously, by Him, to God's well-satisfied praise for ever. And so, *worship*. What prayers and supplications were those, which Jesus once made in the day of His grief and bruising ; and what praise will that be, which Jesus will hereafter lead, when He thus takes the cup of salvation ! Where could have been the temples that would have been filled with such incense, as the Son brings ! What sacrifices has our God thus accepted in His sanctuary ! Surely it is our comfort to know this ; for it is in the midst of our ruins, these temples are raised. *Man* has rendered to God that offering, in which He takes His fullest and most perfect complacency. And what an economy was that, which could thus magnify and make honourable, and raise to highest excellence, all fruit of human growth, from out of that bed of thorns and thistles (the accursed earth, Gen. iii.) which we had produced and witnessed !

These thoughts arise, while thinking on that cup

which Jesus drank here, and on that other cup which He refused for the present, waiting to take it in the kingdom. But I will pass on, just again observing, that wherever we have noticed any thing peculiar to our Evangelist in this portion of his Gospel, it is still, as we have now seen, according to the design and manner of the Spirit in him. The great materials are, of course, the same in all, for all is fact and truth ; but the Lord's mind through it all is thus variously given out to us.

XXIV.—We have now reached the closing chapter of our Gospel, and there, as in the corresponding place of each Gospel, we find the Lord in resurrection.

In resurrection, the Lord breaks forth, laden with the full fruit of complete victory over all the power of the enemy. It is, in His person, the burning lamp after the passage of the smoking furnace. The previous season had been "the hour and the power of darkness" (xxii. 53), Satan's time for the putting forth of all his strength. But wherein they dealt proudly, the Lord was above them ; and this is our comfort, that the enemy has been met in the height of his strength and pride. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the second morning in the history of creation. When the foundations of old were laid, "the morning stars sang together." But that workmanship was spoiled. Adam betrayed the kingdom he had received from God into the hand of Satan, and death entered. The Son of God, however, entered also ; and as it was appointed unto men once to

die, so Christ was once offered. (Heb. ix.) He took on Himself the penalty, the death deserved by us; and thus the grave of Jesus is seen by faith, as the end of the old creation. But His resurrection is the morning of a new and more glorious one, and the saints, the sons of God, sing, in spirit, over it. It is the clay in the hand of the potter a second time, to bring forth a vessel that can never be marred. It is the foundation of an enduring kingdom; and that kingdom, thus to be received by the risen Jesus, the second man, He will not, like Adam, betray into the hand of the enemy; but, in due season, deliver up without taint to God, even the Father, that all may end in "God" being "all in all." (1 Cor. xv.)

How blessed this is—how satisfying and encouraging, thus to see the Lord undoing all the mighty mischief of the rebellion of the first man, and, in the way of righteousness, repairing the breach! And who can tell the glory of that economy, where mercy and truth so meet together? Who can understand the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in such a mystery! And it is that by which He shews Himself. His glory is seen "in the face of Jesus Christ." In the work of grace and in its fruits in glory, God is revealing Himself; so that to know Him, and to be happy in the assurance of His love through Jesus, is the same thing. "He that loveth not knoweth not God."

It was on this very ground, that, of old, God sought to be known as God by the Jews. He claimed to be worshipped by them as the one only God, because He had shewn Himself their Redeemer. "I am the Lord

thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods but me." In this action, He had made Himself known as God, for God is that blessed One who is full of grace and power for poor captive sinners ; and if we know Him not as such, we know Him not rightly. Any thought about God at variance with this, is but the act of the mind of a darkened creature busying itself about its own idolatry. The true God is He, who reveals Himself in redeeming grace and power ; and, blessed truth, to know God is accordingly to know myself a sinner saved by grace.

By the primitive order of creation, glory was secured as God's portion—blessing as the creature's. The serpent beguiled the man, so as to lead him to seek the glory for himself.—“Ye shall be as gods.” And by this the whole divine order was disturbed, for man righteously lost his place of blessing, in this attempt to take God's place of glory. The work of redemption restores this order. It puts things in their due place again. Faith, or redemption through grace, does this, for it excludes boasting and secures blessing. It reserves the place of glory for God, and that of blessing for man ; and that is the way of God, according to the order of creation, as it came forth in Eden from His hand. He cannot own man in his pride, in his old attempt to be as God ; but having humbled him, and asserted that glory is His alone, He will then shew that blessing is man's. For indeed, through His own goodness, blessing is as much the creature's *due* place, as glory is God's. His love, which is Himself, has made it so. He has as surely consulted for man's joy,

as for His own praise. He will shew Himself *just*, thus providing for His own glory ; but He will also shew Himself *a justifier*, thus providing for the sinner's blessing. And the resurrection of the Lord tells us all this. It tells us both of God's glory, in His destroying the very head of all the offence, and of man's blessing in having all grace imparted to him, though an offender. This is the lesson it reads to us. Of course, hard to be learned by those who have sought to exalt themselves, and affected to be as God. But a lesson which, if redeemed, we must learn ; for redemption must restore God's own primitive and unchangeable principles, and put Him into the place of unrivalled, unquestioned, glory, while it gives the creature equally the place of full, unquestioned, blessing.

The subject of this chapter suggests these things, as general truths, to the mind. But in our Evangelist's account of it, wherever there is any thing peculiar, it will, I believe, be found to be characteristic also.— Thus the journey to Emmaus, which in detail we get only here, presents our Lord in the grace of the Teacher still, dealing with the thoughts and affections of men.

When the Lord was in the world before, He shewed Himself equally to all, for He was beseeching men to be reconciled, attracting their confidence by services of unwearied love. But now, in resurrection, He is known only to His own. The world had refused His goodness, had seen and hated Him and His Father, and were not entitled to see Him now in His exaltation, on His way to the highest heavens. But they who loved Him in the world shall see Him now. Five hundred such, unnamed and unknown though they be, shall look

on Him, as well as Peter or John, and look on Him, too, with as full appropriating a faith as they. And all His visits to them are in love and peace. But love will express itself differently, according to the condition and need of its object. If its object be in sorrow, love will soothe ; if walking in light, love will gladden and approve ; if gone astray, love will lead again into paths of righteousness. And so is it with the risen Lord who loves for ever. Thus, He visits Mary to refresh her desirous heart with His presence ; He visits Thomas to restore his unbelieving soul ; and here, the two disciples, to lead them back by the way which they came, as they had taken their journey under the power of unbelief. All was, thus, the same love, though suiting itself differently to its different objects. These two needed restoration, and their Lord restores them. At first He makes Himself strange, rebuking them for their slowness of heart, and then leads them, as the great prophet of God, and the teacher of men, through all the scriptures, till the light and power of His words warm their hearts.

This was full of divine grace. It was the restoring of the soul in the love of the Good Shepherd. But still it gives occasion to this thought—*that the Lord delights in reality, or truthfulness of heart.* These disciples, as they walked, were *sad*. That sadness was real ; it was the affection that suited their circumstances, as they judged them to be. They had been disappointed. They had lost, as they feared, the hope of Israel ; and if their hearts at all were true to such things, they must have been sad : and they were sad. Thus there was reality about them, though also slow-

ness of heart to believe *all* that the prophets had spoken. And Jesus loves that. Jesus loves that all about us should have the stamp of truth in the inward parts. And He joins Himself to these sad ones, to shew them, that "the things which had happened at Jerusalem," as they spake, were really for them, and not against them ; and He makes that, which was *shaking* their faith, *confirm* it. And in His way of communicating it, there is so much of human loveliness, that all is still according to His path under the tracing hand of our Evangelist. "He made as though He would have gone further." How perfect that little movement was ! What title had He, a stranger as He seemed to be, to obtrude Himself on them ? He had only joined them by the way, in the courtesy of one who was travelling the same road. What right had such an one to cross their threshold ? If Jesus be but a stranger in our eyes, beloved, He will still walk outside. Till we know Him as Son of God, the Saviour, the lover of our souls, surely He asks for nothing. We may dwell in our own houses, and furnish our own tables, till then. But when He is known by us as Jesus, as the Son of God who has loved us and given Himself for us, then He claims a place in our hearts and our homes ; and then will He dwell with us and sup with us, as it were, unbidden ; entering, in the person of some of His little ones, either to get a cup of cold water, or to have the feet washed, at moments, perhaps, that we looked not for Him.

And may we be ready, dear brethren ! Indeed, it is a blessed state, though hard to our hearts at times. Ever ready, and at the disposal of the need of each other ;

thus entertaining, not angels merely, but the Lord of angels, the Brother of His saints, and the Friend of sinners. But as yet, on this occasion, to these two, He was but a stranger; and, therefore, He would leave them to their rest and repast alone, though it was now growing dark, and He had spent Himself much in talking with them. But O the adorning that was upon Him! The ornament of a perfect spirit graced every little passage of His life. What dignity, when dignity was the thing; what tenderness, when that, in its turn, was called for. If man had but the eye for them, what forms of moral beauty would have continually passed before him in the doings and goings of this perfect Son of man. Never for a single moment was there the least disturbance in the moral bearing of all that was about Him. But man had no eye or ear for Him. When we saw Him, there was no beauty that we should desire Him. The true beauty was no beauty in man's eye. None of this perfection was according to man. But at times, through grace, there was the burning of the heart. And so it is here. These two happy ones own the power of His presence, and find their souls restored, and their feet led back to the city, the way by which they had come, and which to them was the path of righteousness again.

This is the way of the grace of the risen Lord to those two disciples. And this is quite His way in this Gospel. So, in what follows in the larger company at Jerusalem, we have the marks of our Gospel still as fresh as ever before us. For there, the Lord is especially careful to verify his *manhood*, to shew that He was none other than the Son of man risen from the

dead. He establishes that first, by shewing them His hands and His feet, and then by taking of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb, and eating before them. And thus we see Him *the man* before us still, once the anointed man, and now the risen man. And having thus approved Himself, He deals with them as men, acting as their teacher, according to His accustomed place in this Gospel, opening the scriptures to them, and their understandings to the scriptures. And having thus sealed to them this fruit of the resurrection, the opened understanding, He promises them "power from on high," in order that they might be witnesses of the things which they had now learnt.

This "power from on high" is, of course, a description of the Holy Ghost, called also "the promise of the Father." But it intimates the Holy Ghost under a special manifestation, and such an one, too, as is still according to the character of our Gospel. In neither Matthew nor Mark is this divine gift of the ascended Lord spoken of. But in John, in a still more blessed sense, He is promised as "the Comforter" or "the Spirit of truth," that is, the witness in the saints of grace and glory, the things of the Father and the Son. These distinctions are quite characteristic. The day of Pentecost brought this divine gift from the glorified Son of man, and that gift at once manifests His presence according to the promise here made; St Luke's Gospel, which is our Evangelist's first letter to Theophilus, thus, ending with the promise of the Holy Ghost; the book of the Acts, which is his second letter to the same friend, opening with the gift according to the promise.

And that book has been properly called "the Acts of the Holy Ghost." It comes after the four Gospels. And as they, or the ministry of Jesus which they record, had given the full formal manifestation of the Father and the Son, so this book, which records the ministry of the Apostles and others, gives the same manifestation of the Holy Ghost. The persons in the Godhead are, thus, in due season declared, for the full light and comfort of the Church. Notices of this divine mystery, no doubt, there had been from the beginning, but the name of God—"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," was now fully manifested and published.

All this, as every thing of our God, is perfect in its season. The incarnation and ministry of the Lord was the manifestation of *the Father and the Son*; the present age is the manifestation of *the Holy Ghost*; the age to come, when the golden city is to descend, or the Bride to take her place with the Lamb in power, will be the manifestation of *the Church*. All is perfection in the ways of His wisdom, as in the works of His grace. The Lord tells out one secret after another, bringing forth each in due season, and leading the soul to say, "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

But this only by the way. I have already observed that the notice, which we get here of the Holy Ghost, is according to this Gospel, keeping it, as it were, between Matthew or Mark on the one hand, and John on the other, the former giving us no such notice of the Spirit at all, the latter giving us still larger and richer notice of Him, under the titles of "the Comforter," and "the Spirit of truth." But so, after this,

down to the last syllable, the Gospel is still according to itself. I mean in what happens at the closing moments in Bethany.

To that well-known spot, a retreat for "the poor of the flock" at "the back side of the desert," the fold of those whom He loved in Judea (John xi. 3), the Lord now leads forth His disciples. And there, while blessing them, He is parted from them, and carried up into heaven. This is quite Himself in this Gospel. This is still "the man Christ Jesus," for this is the action and attitude of the Priest, the Mediator, and there is but one Mediator between God and man, and that is, "the *man* Christ Jesus." Every high priest is taken *from among men*, and this action was just that of the true Aaron, the priest with the hand uplifted to bless (Lev. ix. 22). Like Aaron, He had now been anointed, and was giving proof of His ministry. He was presenting, as it were, the first-fruits of His priestly services. The resurrection had declared Him to be the Son of God, and called Him to the priesthood (Heb. v.), and He was, as at this moment, beginning to fulfil its duties of holy love. He had not, at the time of this chapter, formally entered upon it, because His temple was in the heavens. But ere He leaves His people, He gives them a sample of His actings, as the ascended heavenly Priest. He lifted up His hands and blest them. And as soon as He had done so, and sealed to them this further fruit of His resurrection, He was parted from them, and carried into the temple itself, where He sits, as "the man Christ Jesus," till all have come to the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ; till

all who are of His risen flesh and bones have been brought in to form the new man, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.* Our Gospel had opened with the priest of the family of Levi, in the temple at Jerusalem, and now closes with the Priest, the risen Lord, as in the temple in heaven. And it was *the man* Jesus, in His infancy, in His human relationship and place, that we got at the beginning, and it is *the man* Jesus still, risen and glorified, and about to be seated in His honours and place in the heavens, that we get now at the end.

In this character of the priest, and of the risen man, so fully according to the mind of the Spirit in our Evangelist, we now lose sight of our Lord. And the closing view which we get of Him in each Gospel, does indeed strike me as very distinguishing and characteristic.—In Matthew (to look at it again for a moment) the Lord does not change His place. He is still here, still on the earth again, simply saying, “all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations ; lo, I am with you.” As though He were just the Lord of the harvest, ordering and strengthening His husbandry. In Mark, He is received up into heaven, but still, on the Apostles going forth to preach, He is spoken of as present and working *with* them. In John, neither He nor they remain on earth, but Peter and John follow Jesus, and we lose sight of them altogether. But here, He is

* It is only at the close of this Gospel, that our Lord in resurrection exhibits Himself to His people as having “flesh and bones.” The Apostle gives us a commentary, afterwards, on this. (See Ephes. v. 30).

carried up alone, and there abides, as their High Priest within the veil, sending down the Holy Ghost to be with them here, as power from on high.

This is all quite in character. In our Gospel, the Lord ascends as the Priest to be alone in the sanctuary in heaven—in Mark, He ascends to the right hand of power, in order to preside over and share in the ministry of His servants—in John, He ascends as the Son of the Father, in order to introduce the children to the Father's house.

He was "carried up" (*ανεφερετο*). The expression implies that some conveyance waited Him. And indeed He had been thus waited on from very old time: When exhibited and spoken of as "the Glory," "the angel of God," "the Angel of His presence," or "the Lord" (Ex. xiv., xxiii., xxxii.; Isa. lxiii.), the cloud conveys Him hither and thither. It first took Him at the head of His redeemed people, to lead them in the way. (Ex. xiii.) It then carried Him between the camps of Israel and Egypt, that He might be light to the one and darkness to the other, and out of it so look as to trouble the Egyptians. (Ex. xiv.) At times it brought him to take His seat in judgment upon His trespassing and murmuring congregation. (Ex. xvi.; Num. xiv., xvi., xx.) And after all this, it took Him to fill His place in the temple (2 Chron. v.), as it had before, in like manner, borne Him to fill the same place in the tabernacle. (Ex. xl.)

Thus did the cloudy chariot wait on Him of old (Ps. civ. 3). And when the sin of the people had disturbed His rest in the midst of them, the cherubim bear Him away (Ezek. i.); and the cherubim was

called "the chariot of the cherubim" (1 Chron. xxviii. 18). Thus He was attended, on all these occasions, by His appointed chariot. And so is He now. He is "carried up."

On all these former occasions, however, He is spoken of variously, as I have noticed, or indefinitely, as "the Glory," "the Angel of God," "the Angel of His presence," and "the Lord." And, in the last place that I have mentioned, in Ezekiel, His likeness is "as the appearance of a man." From henceforth, however, this Glory, this Angel-Jehovah, becomes stamped with the form and characters of man. It is the risen Son of man, who is now carried up to His place on high. It is not merely "the appearance of a man," but one whose manhood has been assured and verified. As such, He now ascends. *The Glory has taken His abiding form.* And as the glorified man it is, that we from henceforth, in the book of God, see Him. In the vision of the prophet, He is, after this, as the glorified man brought with the clouds of heaven, to the Ancient of days, to receive His kingdom (Dan. vii.); as such, He stands, in the eye of another prophet, in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev. i.); as such, He tells us Himself, that He will hereafter be seen sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. xxvi.); and as such, when all the judgment is passed, His name will be made excellent in all the earth. (Ps. viii.; Heb. ii.)

This is a wondrous theme. It is *man* that has been thus anointed, and *man* that is to be thus exalted. The ranks of angels, which have as yet surrounded the

throne, must open, as it were, to let the church of redeemed sinners in, that man may be displayed as the appointed vessel of the glory in the ages before us.—“What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?”

When the priest Zacharias went into the temple, the whole multitude owned the power of his entrance there, and were without praying at the time of incense, as we read in this Gospel (see i. 10). And when Moses went within the cloud, being thus, as by the vail, shut within the sanctuary of God, the people rose up, every one standing at his tent door, and worshipping. (Ex. xxxiii.) So here, on this entrance of the risen Son of man within the cloud (Acts. i. 9), as within the vail of the true temple, the people without own the power of His ascension there, and again look after Him and worship. But then it is here, and only here, that they are His own people worshipping Himself. “They worshipped *him*, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

Their worship was praise. For such only was now the seasonable worship. How could they eat the bread of mourners, while surrounding such an altar as this? It was, shall I not call it, the feast of the resurrection, which they were now keeping, and it must be kept with rejoicing. The first-fruits of the harvest had been accepted for them, and they must offer their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings, with joy, in His temple (Lev. xxiii. 10). They were waiting for the Pentecost, the feast of weeks, but “Jesus and the resurrection” was their feast, and it was only with

gladness they could look on that accepted sheaf of first-fruits waved before the Lord.

“Amen,” as in all the Gospels, seals this witness of our Evangelist. But we have not the same rapturous note of admiration as at the close of John. For all the writings may not be equally elevated, though equally perfect in their order, and divine in their original; as one star differeth from another in glory, though all are equally in the heavens, which God alone created and made. Luke, like the others, is in his own character to the very end, as we have now seen. It is the Son of Man, whom the Spirit traces by him, as it had been Messiah, or Jesus in Jewish connection, by Matthew; Jesus the Servant or Minister by Mark; and Jesus the Son of God, Son of the Father, by John. And this perfect man was first the *anointed* man, walking through the varied paths of this life, and in all of them presenting to God offerings of untainted human fruit, in such a vessel as had never before furnished or adorned His sanctuary—then the *risen* man, shewing Himself to His own in His victory over death and the power of the enemy, and in samples of some of the blessing which that victory had gained for them—and finally, as the *ascended* or *glorified* man, about to perfect in their behalf before the throne of God, and in the heavenly temple, till He come again, all the fruit of His life and conflict and victory, and to fill them with joy and praise for ever and ever.

What a sight, and what a theme, beloved! “This wondrous man!” Let us say, in the highest reach and sense of our souls, “I find no fault in this man.” And

the words of another, though homely, may sweetly close our meditations on this precious and wondrous theme.

A MAN there is, a real man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands and feet and side.

'Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak ;
This same dear man in heaven now reigns,
That suffer'd for our sake.

This wondrous man, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God :
He bought our souls from death and hell,
The price, His own heart's blood.

That human heart He still retains,
'Tho' throned in highest bliss ;
And feels each tempted member's pains,
For our affliction's His.

His blood can cleanse the blackest soul,
And wash our guilt away :
He shall present us sound and whole
In that tremendous day.

HERE we leave our happy occupation, tracing the varied ways of our divine Lord and Saviour. O that it could leave the same *power* in the soul behind it, as it imparted *joy* to the soul engaged in it ! But the heart knows its own secret causes of full and constant humiliation, and has well learnt the fitness of that word, "when thou art bidden to a feast, go and sit down in the lowest room." May our God, beloved, train our hearts to His own joys, which ever find their springs in the person and work of the Son of His love ! And may He also free us of ourselves more and more, that Jesus may be only seen in us and by us !

In closing these meditations, I would again say, that the skill, which is thus with a little care discernible in this, and in each of the Gospels, is perfectly divine. It is indeed of God's own hand. Had each of the evangelists introduced his writing by a formal declaration of the design of it, and how it was to distinguish itself from the others, the wisdom and perfections of Him who indited them, would not have been so glorified, nor would the same exercise of heart have been so called out, as now it is by reaching this distinct purpose through the "characteristic exhibition" in which each of the Gospels abounds. But as they now stand, it is the very harmony of creation that we listen to. "There is no speech or language," but, without these, they express themselves. Thus we see, that the very same hand which fashioned the heavens, and gave them their voice in the ear of men, has traced the glories that shine in the different Gospels, and given them a voice, likewise, in the ear of saints. (See Ps. xix.)

But after all this, beloved, the Gospel itself must be our object. May the Lord keep that fresh and immediate upon our hearts continually? It is the Gospel itself, the tale of God's unmeasured love, and which heaven calls the earth to listen to, that bears with it the real and abiding blessing to our souls. It is the entrance of the living God, God of all grace as He is, through the testimony of the Son of His love, into our hearts, that sheds abroad the light, the liberty, the victory there, and is the seed in us of eternal life. As one has said—"a man may be captivated by this intellectual and moral harmony, and take much pleasure in tracing it through all its detail, and yet derive

no more profit from it than from the examination of any curious piece of material workmanship.—It is proper that this beautiful relation in christianity (and I might add, in the scriptures that reveal christianity) should be seen and admired ; but if it come to be the prominent object of belief, the great truth of christianity is not believed.—There is much in christianity that may take a strong hold of the imaginative faculties, and give a high species of enjoyment to the mind, but the most important part of religion in relation to sinners is, its *necessity*. The Gospel has not been revealed that we may have the pleasure of feeling or expressing fine sentiments, but that we may be saved ; the taste may receive the impression of the beauty and sublimity of the Bible, and the nervous system may have received the impression of the tenderness of its tone, and yet its meaning, its deliverance, its mystery of holy love, may remain unknown.”

This is valuable to us. With all our knowledge of other glories and secrets, may our knowledge of that message of surpassing love be still the dearest, and simplest, and most intimate possession of our souls. The Gospel of His grace tells us, that our necessities have drawn forth the sympathies and resources of the blessed God. On such a truth may our hearts still dwell with lingering desires, sitting down “at that one well-spring of delight.” It is in the faith of that, the life, the joy, the liberty, and the strength of our souls, will be found. There is One who has loved us and given Himself for us, and that one none less than the Son of God. Such was the spring of Paul’s life, and to such may we turn continually for

light and refreshing, our hearts taking counsel there still the oftenest. And when the last of us is gathered in, and all have come "into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God," it is that we may be taken there, where with enlarged powers, both of understanding and joy, we shall praise this Lamb that was slain for the love that He had for us, for evermore.

May His grace keep us with uncorrupted minds and undefiled garments, dear brethren, that we may know Him only in this evil world, for His name's sake !

*Sold by J. Tunley,
Guernsey.*

