Matthew - Commentaries by R. Beacon

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This is a unique incident in the Gospels, peculiar to St. Matthew; yet, however slight it may seem, we may be sure there was a divine reason for its insertion in an inspired writing, where nothing is casual. Seemingly the verse containing it might be removed without affecting the sense or the sequence of the passage. The contrast between Pilate's better spirit and the envenomed malice of the chief priests would be equally vivid. But the statement anent Pilate's wife clearly shows that he was somewhat at least influenced by her. It is well known that such influence was often exerted by women, and naturally exercised as a rule on the side of mercy. Indeed, the Romans on this very account objected to provincial governors taking their wives with them, lest they should be deflected from the line of rigid justice. And we know how severe the Romans were, though there was much that was excellent in their discipline. Every student of Roman history is aware how conspicuously the manlier virtues stand out in the records of her chroniclers.

But, with dominion, luxury and skepticism had increased, and there was a condition of over-elaborated culture that is only too closely paralleled by not a little that we see around us now. It is always so in the history of nations: first, power; then, wealth and luxury; then, degeneracy. And of such over-ripe, exotic culture Pilate was probably a crucial type. His very question, “What is truth?” addressed to our Lord, indicated the languid cynicism with which he regarded the matter. For undoubtedly the interpretation placed on the question by Lord Bacon, usually so sage and shrewd, is quite wide of the mark. That great philosopher says in one of his famous essays: “What is truth, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.” But Pilate was not jesting at all; his question was simply the outcome of his despairing pessimism. Alas! he knew not that Truth embodied in a Person, in the Son of man, stood before him. But of this presently. Meanwhile, it is easy to realize how in his wavering mind the admonition of his wife must have reinforced the arguments suggested by his intellectual keenness, and perhaps some vestiges of compassion.

But to return to Claudia Procula, the name (according to tradition) of the lady whose disturbed dream is recorded by the Evangelist. And, first of all, may we not surmise, for the reason stated above, viz., that nothing is casual or insignificant in scripture, that it was not merely superstitious feeling that prompted her action; that her heart, nay, perhaps her conscience in some measure had been reached in God's mysterious providence, and that, if not then, yet in the sequel she may really have bowed to Him who is the Truth, as He is the Way and the Life—the only Savior? Of course, it would be unwise to dogmatize; the evidence is not forthcoming, and speculation, unsatisfactory at all times, is nowhere more so than when indulged in the things of God. We simply do not know; we can only recognize the numerous ways that the Spirit of God has of dealing with men and women, and that dreams at times have played a not unimportant part in spiritual experiences. But it is far from unlikely that Claudia may have seen our Lord. What more probable than that, on one or more of her comings and goings to and from her husband's palace, she may have come across Him during His visits to Jerusalem, or even elsewhere? There may have been a great concourse, as on the day when the Lord repaired to the house of Jairus, and when He healed the woman with the issue of blood. We know how dense the throng was on that occasion, and on some similar one the litter, borne by numerous slaves, of the highly-placed Roman lady may have been, in modern parlance, “held up.” Then she may have beheld that gracious Presence, and God may have first led her to see something awe-inspiring as well as holy in “that just man.” Either this, or it was revealed to her in the dream itself that He was something far above the common run of men. All this may have been. Now let us turn to the application.

I suppose this verse is not very frequently selected as a text. In the course of a fairly long life I have heard hundreds of sermons (some of the best by lips never more to be heard on earth), but never from Matthew 27:19: “Have thou nothing to do with that just man.” Nay, but with Him we must all have to do. Claudia Procula, and her husband the Roman Governor, and all mankind—as Savior or as Judge. Of course, we know what she meant. She did not wish Pilate to take' upon himself the responsibility of condemning an innocent man. Somehow she know He was innocent; nay, just, for she does not use a merely negative term. Truly, if she knew little, and was still far from the kingdom of God, the Governor was much farther off. He certainly thought the lowly prisoner at the bar at whose claims to kingship he had half-contemptuously, half-pityingly marveled, had to do with him, Pontius Pilate, the representative of the mighty Empire of Rome. “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee” (John 19:10). We all know with what divine dignity and calm the blessed Lord replied. No wonder the Governor was more and more perplexed. Yes, all of us must have to do with “that just man.” Blessed are they who have to do with Him now, who bow to Him now, and prove the value of His precious blood that cleanseth from every sin. Is it not striking how unconsciously Pilate's wife deprecates what is imperative for all of us, if we would be saved? Of course, she was right from her limited point of view. But, how terrible to have no link with Him! This poor woman little knew how far it was from being merely a question of common rectitude in a ruler; little knew that the terrible thing would be, if Christ let her alone! if God said, as once of old, “Ephraim is joined unto idols; let him alone.” Nay, that were the most dreadful thing of all-to be let alone now, to be judged in a future day! For “all things are naked and opened before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). Let us have to do with Him now.

Pilate's indecision brought, it would seem, additional suffering on our Lord. Avowing that he found no evil in Him, yet he had Him scourged, and what he proposed as an alternative to the crucifixion was really an aggravation of the Savior's bitter pains. For after all, and against his better judgment, the Governor, spite of his wife's remonstrances, was craven enough to yield to the wicked importunity of the Sanhedrin. He had, we know, very cogent reasons for giving way to the Jews, inasmuch as he was in very bad odor in Palestine because of his misdeeds. He was therefore, as Mark tells us (chap. 15:15), “willing to content the people.” He did not doubt for a moment that his prisoner had to do with him as duly appointed judge. Poor, unhappy Pilate! His was a sad record, and tradition has it that he committed suicide in Gaul. Legend also became busy with his history in connection with Mount Pilatus, in Switzerland. A small thing for him that his name is immortal with unenviable notoriety by reason of his association with that very One whom he doubtless regarded as merely a Galilean peasant. Yet but for this connection with the Savior of mankind he would probably have been no more famous than any other governor of an (in Roman eyes) unimportant province. It is singular to think how his name is daily heard in the creeds of Christendom. Alas! no mere outward link avails. The

Roman Governor was confident that our Lord had to do with him; he did not know that he and all mankind have to do with Christ. And so he gave orders that it should be as the chief priests required. And in the energetic and most pathetic language of Luke 23:25, “He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.” For, as we read, they asked for Barabbas, whose name, by a singular coincidence, means “son of the father.” The true Son of the Father was crucified.

But to return to Pilate's demand, “What is truth?” This is a question that is asked now-a-days often enough, sometimes half languidly, or half cynically, as Pilate asked it. Others say we must ever pursue after it, but never imagine we have got it. And if by truth people mean mere knowledge, they are undoubtedly quite right. For is not science ever having to revise her judgments? A notable instance of this occurred only recently, when the discovery of radium and radio-activity, threw much suspicion on the soundness of a long-established chemical axiom, viz., that each element is essentially differentiated from every other. Yet long ago Sir William Hamilton, a noted Scottish philosopher, declared that of things in themselves we could know nothing. Even so; and that spite of the marvelous and, in themselves, most admirable discoveries of science. But “the truth, where is that?” Only in Christ, even as grace and truth come by Him. “God,” scripture declares, “is light,” and “God is love.” Love and Light revealed to guilty sinners take the shape of grace and truth.

And as our Lord reveals, nay, is “the truth” (i.e., He reveals God to me, shows me what I am, and what God is; also shows the remedy for me, else it were sad indeed), what is revealed is fact. Christianity rests on the bedrock of fact. The well-known creeds of Christendom were attempts to embody these facts, at least the main ones, in succinct language; and with all their defects, they have doubtless been a help to very many. It need hardly be said that no formal recitation of a creed, however correct, can save the soul. Moreover, they are not inspired; the scriptures are, and we must ever refer all to the “word and the testimony.” Probably in the past, when few comparatively could read, the salient facts of Christianity were by such means conveniently committed to memory. And Christianity is either fact or fiction. We cannot have it both ways, as so many, alas! in a vague and indifferent fashion, are content to do. The resurrection, in short, may not be spiritualized. As one has said, unless we believe as literally in the resurrection of Christ as in His death and burial, we are not Christians at all.” Thus wrote many years ago the late Bishop of Durham. But the majority of the readers of this magazine will rightly regard this most important statement as too obvious to need emphasizing. Christianity requires no vehement protestations in defense of its supernatural origin. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself” (1 John 5:10). And may we not say, in conclusion, that all who believe thank God for opening their eyes, thank Him that they have had to do with His Son in this day of His grace?

R. B.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 7. The Net

Ver. 47. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind,” &c. In this last parable the kingdom is again presented as comprehending the whole of Christendom, not as in the parables of the tares, the tree, and the leaven; but as it is in its effects and purpose in the eye of God. We know it is His purpose to gather out of the world a people for Himself, and the means used for this is likened unto a net cast into the sea. The net is evidently the preaching of the cross of Christ—to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness. The world's religion, Pharisaism, has ever stumbled at the cross of Christ. The world's wisdom and philosophy have ever deemed it folly. But to the simple, humble believer it is the power and wisdom of God. The sea is the symbol of the inhabitants of the earth in a state of tumult and lawlessness. And such is eminently the state of the world. And it is into such a world, into such a sea casting up mire and dirt, that the gospel net has been cast, and fishes of every kind are enclosed. Within the bounds of Christendom, and under the name of Christian, are to be found, not the greatest good only, but the greatest wickedness in the earth. There are real and false disciples of Christ.

What a different view is taken of the kingdom, according as we look at it from the earth, or from the heavenly places!-standing outside with the multitude, or in the house with Jesus. From the former we get only its external features—a great wheat-field, but the cross mingled and spoiled by tares; a great tree, with its vast branches shooting out on every side; and a certain mass of meal with leaven working till the whole was leavened. A system adapting itself to the peculiarities and characteristics of the different nations among whom it is established, as if its propagators would make a perverted use of the apostle's words, “All things to all men.” A system which possesses enough of native energy to give a certain distinctive feature to all who are in it; while yet affording room for the development of all the shades of difference comprised in Catholicism of east or west, in nationalism or dissent. The aim and intent of Satan is to bring such men under the control of a priestly, quasi-spiritual bondage, compared with which no yoke is so heavy and intolerable; and this in utter contravention of God's purpose in establishing His Church in the world. God calls to separation from the world, and the taking up of the cross in practice as well as in principle. His enemy's system pursues union with the world, and, by means of this, promises ease and honor. But it is only when in ''the house,” and our minds under the tuition and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we see the extreme contrariety between the true position of the saint and that which is assumed by the professing world. The net is cast into the sea, and its purpose is to separate those within it from the mass outside. In the parable of the tares the reason is given why, or how, tares came to be mingled with the wheat. Men slept, and during that time the enemy sowed his tares. Here we have no reason given why the net encloses bad fishes as well as good ones; it is simply the fact—such is the case. The world sees only what unfaithfulness and worldliness have made of it; viz., the Church-world. The TRUTH shows us that the net is God's means for gathering out His own. That may be seen by the multitude; this only by the disciple in the house.

So when the four empires were symbolically presented to the Gentile king, they had their worldly aspect. There was the similitude of a great image, majestic in its proportions, composed of the most costly, durable, and useful of metals: there was in it that which recommended itself to the world, the splendor and richness of gold and silver, the strength and serviceableness of brass and iron. True, there was clay also, but that was down low in the feet and was comparatively overshadowed by the beauty and brightness of the head and breast of gold and silver. Here is the world's estimation of imperial power and successful ambition; and they bow down and worship; but when these same empires are shown in Symbol to the saint, they are characterized by unclean and terror-striking beasts, beasts greedy of blood, ferocious, untameable, and indeed the last one had such preeminence in those qualities, that no animal known to man was able to set forth its character; and so a nondescript monster a terror naturae was held up to the prophet's eye to symbolize the fourth empire. This gives us God's judgment about these empires, and shows us what value His saints should put upon their splendor and power. That which is pleasing to the natural man is an abomination to God.

This parable and that of the tare-field bear this resemblance, that they both present to us the mixed character of the kingdom; but they differ in that the latter brings more prominently to view the kingdom during the continuance of the present age; the former most discloses that which takes place at the end. The one is the final separation and the other the co-existence of the two characters found in the world which owns Christ externally. In the explanation given by our Lord to the disciples, the issue in blessing and misery of the wheat and the tares is made known; but in the parable itself the principle thought is, “let both grow together.” But in the parable of the net, the great thought is seen in the act of the fishermen selecting the good and putting them into vessels, and in rejecting the bad. The fishermen are not represented as being the active agents in punishing the bad: they simply leave them, casting them away. The angels here, as in the parable of the tares, are the executors of God's vengeance. We have not the true saints considered distinct from the mass of professors, as in the “hid treasure” and in “the pearl,” nor is it an external view of the kingdom as presented in those parables spoken outside to the multitude; but a picture of the whole as it appears to God, and as He would have His saints view it, and the means He has adopted in calling out His people from the world. It is the winding up of the present age. The great net which was let down into the sea, when Christ was first proclaimed, is now drawn to the land. The sowing and ripening of the field are at an end, and the sifting time is come. The floor will be thoroughly purged, the wheat gathered into the garner, the chaff burnt with unquenchable fire.

The good are first taken care of, and put in vessels by those fit for that work; after that selection, (how long is not said), the angels do their work. The parable gives only the putting of the good into vessels, nor is this confined to one act, but rather, we apprehend, gives the character of the time (so far as the good are concerned) which will elapse from the first separation to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. And we know that the rapture of the Church will take place before judgment descends upon the wicked. For when the Son of man is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, the heavenly saints will appear with Him, and, consequently, must have been gathered to Him before (Col. 3). Be the interval then between that rapture and the revelation of the Lord Jesus with these saints in flaming fire, long or short, the two events cannot be at the same moment. The dead saints will be raised and the living saints changed, and both shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4). This is a very different scene from the time when He and His armies shall be revealed to His enemies. It is a great mistake to confound these distinct parts of His coming or presence. The Church of God is ever directed to expect the coming of the Lord Jesus at any moment. His disciples are always to be waiting, always expecting. This is the true position of the Church of God. There is no event given which must precede His coming to receive us in the air. There are many prophecies which must be fulfilled before His and our appearing can take place. We know that the letting thing must be taken away and the lawless one revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of His mouth, and with the appearing, or shining forth, of His presence (2 Thess. 2). There are signs given which shall usher in the great and terrible day of the Lord. There are times and dates given, days, and months, and years, which must pass before that event. (Vide Daniel and the revelation).

We do not enter into the questions, whether the days be symbolical or natural, whether we can compute and fix the precise date of their commencement or not, &c. We simply say that the giving of any time to elapse previously, or of any sign to precede, is incompatible with the position of waiting for Christ continually. And that this is the true position of the Church of God, has been fully proved in another paper of this periodical (p. 210), and which we need not now enter upon. When the Lord descends in the air to meet His Church, this peculiar phase of the kingdom (which we may call its Church aspect) ceases. It is the kingdom of heaven as a whole which we have here. There are other saints, outside the Church, which have a share in the kingdom and in the first resurrection. The heavenly saints, symbolized by the twenty-four elders, are in heaven before that tremendous drama of the Apocalyptic judgments begins; and, while we see them in heaven, there are saints, Gentiles, as well as Jews, on the earth, passing through great tribulation, whom afterward, yet previous to the great catastrophe, the prophet John sees with white robes (Rev. 6; 7; 14 &c.) But during that terrible time, the kingdom takes again the same character it had before the day of Pentecost (i.e., it is not strictly the Church character). The principles of this time are found in the earlier chapters of the Acts; for, although the Church was formed, yet her peculiar position and privileges were not as yet brought out; the message or preaching of the kingdom, although extending to the Gentile through the blood of a slain and risen Christ, was particularly addressed to Jews, and in the wisdom of God it was necessary that the Jew should entirely reject it before the full development of His amazing grace could take place. It was when the testimony of Jesus on the earth, and also of the Holy Ghost after the Lord's ascension had both been rejected by God's own ancient people, that the super-abounding grace of God to the lost Jew and Gentile indiscriminately, came fully out.

The gathering of the good fish into vessels by the fishermen is, evidently, a distinct act from the separation of the wicked from among the just, which last term is a very common designation of Old Testament saints, and but seldom applied to the saints since Pentecost, except when the Holy Ghost applies Old Testament scripture to them, as for instance, “the just shall live by faith.” But again, the action of the angels differs in character. The fishermen gather the good into vessels, to take care of and preserve them—an act of interest and value. The angels sever the wicked from among the just. It is the contrast of those who sought out the good; these seek out the bad for punishment, and “cast them into the furnace of fire,” —an act of vengeance and wrath. The “just,” then, we think, comprehend more saints than those standing in full Pentecostal privilege; some of them slain, and having a share in the first resurrection, and some, perhaps, who are not slain, but preserved to form the living nucleus of the millennial kingdom. At the very end of the trouble, when antichrist is judged, the angels come forth, and sever the wicked from the just. The honor and glory of the victory is the Lord's; it is His arm which strikes down the usurper. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the pit. Then the angels come forth, and go through the length and breadth of the kingdom, and gather out all things that offend. Then will the floor of the kingdom be purged; earthly friendships, sex, and association will be unheeded by these messengers. Two men shall be in the field, and two women at the mill: the one shall be taken and the other left. Whether abroad or at home, the angels shall sever the wicked from the just.

One remark more, in comparing the two parables, (viz., tares, field, and net), which bring before us the end of the age. The former is spoken to the multitude outside, and accordingly it is the doom of the tares which is made prominent in the parable, visible and felt by the world. “Bind the tares in bundles and burn them.” The explanation gives the glory (ver. 43), and is given to the disciples, and the parable gives the care for the good as the prominent thought. The explanation (ver. 49, 50), reveals the doom of the bad.

To sum up, we have in these parables, an epitome of the history of the religious world, from the Lord's first advent to His second, given under two general aspects. There is the gift of salvation by grace to man, and then what man has made of it. There is also what God has done, in spite of the perversity of man, and the termination of the whole, bad and good. The sower goes forth to sow, and a general view of the reception of the truth follows, illustrated by the different nature of the ground into which the seed was cast. Man is looked at here in his individuality and in his responsibility. In the remaining parables the state of things is considered. The kingdom being set up (in mystery), six similitudes follow. We stand at the starting point, and look through the scene right up to the end; having, if we may so say, a bird's-eye view

of the whole. Man and the enemy having to do with it, the character of the kingdom soon degenerates; the tares spread, and give character to the field. The crop is spoiled, though the Son of man had sown! But though the tares have ruined the work of God, the wheat are there also. These two co-exist until the end, when the great separation takes place. In the parables of the tree and the leaven, the evil is developed; in the hid treasure and the pearl, the accomplishment of God's purpose appears, notwithstanding the baneful influence of Satan. The tree (earthly exaltation) precedes the leaven of doctrine, and this spreads over the permitted space. But God does not forego His design. The treasure is found and secured. All is given up for the pearl, which shows forth His grace and love, and He is glorified.

Here are two threads of history, in a sense parallel to each other, and probably, also, successive; the one giving the eternal form of the kingdom, and the other the development of the purpose of God. The last parable, the net, brings out conspicuously the time of the end.

We may arrange them in the following order:-

I. Introductory parable.

A sower went forth to sow—the new work by Christ, when rejected as Messiah by the Jews; man before us tested by the seed of the word, and responsible for the reception of the truth.

II. Parable of the wheat and the tares.

The kingdom from first to last. Men careless, and so evil introduced where Christ's name is named, and no remedy but judgment by and by.

III. The application of the two things, the wheat and the tares, in four other parables, two showing the evil, and two the good:-

The Evil.

1. The great tree, or the ecclesiastico-secular body, which man had made of Christianity; and 2. The leaven showing the spread of nominal Christian doctrine over a given mass.

The Good.

1. The treasure, which Jesus finds, and really has made in His people; and

2. The pearl, or His people viewed not only as severally precious, but as one precious jewel.

IV. The termination of the whole in the Net.

The two parties in the kingdom are seen together again, but only to be forever separated, when the end of the age comes, and judgment falls upon the wicked. The history of Christendom is over; the millennial kingdom begins. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

R. B.

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Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 6. The Hid Treasure

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field,” &c. (Ver. 44.) The teaching of this and the following parables is for the disciples alone; they only are addressed. Here we have displayed the motive of God in giving His Son to die for the world. We discover that in the “hid treasure,” and in the “pearl of great price,” the field—the world—is bought for the sake of the treasure, and the “pearl of great price” is secured in the same way; the man in each case sells all that he has, in order to be possessed of the object of his desire. The hid treasure is the Church of God; not the nominal, professing, but the true Church, composed of regenerated men. For the sake of these the field was bought. The Christian dispensation was brought in that a people might be brought into such a position and state of glory as they could not possibly be brought into under the former dispensation. Not God's people merely, but predestinated to “the adoption of sons” (Eph. 1:5), by Jesus Christ to Himself.

The pearl of great price may, perhaps, refer rather to the individual glory of the Redeemer, as the head of the Church, “who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.” For when the kingdom is established in power, the Lord Jesus will not only have glory as God, one with the Father—that glory He has eternally; He will not only as Son of man have glory, as the King over all the earth; He will not only, as Son of David, have glory as King of the Jews—for His glory as King of the Jews is distinct from His universal supremacy over all the earth—but He will have another glory which we believe to be far more precious to Him, the glory that He will have as the head of the Church, when the Church shall be glorified with Him.

This will be, we may, perhaps say, the glory of His grace. The parables of the “treasure” and the “pearl” are intimately connected and reflect upon each other; for it is by the grace of God, through Christ, and the transforming power of the indwelling Spirit, that the Church becomes a treasure to Him; and it is because the Church is thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus made capable of reflecting His image, that He is glorified in it; and this glory, the especial result of the perfecting of the Church (which will be by and by), is the “pearl of great price;” the glory most prized by the Lord. These are the things kept secret from the foundation of the world. The reign of Jesus, as Messiah, the King of the Jews, as King over the whole earth, was a theme continually dwelt upon by the prophets; but it was a secret with God before the foundation of the world, that the Lord Jesus should have a heavenly bride; that a church, His body, should be formed, out of Jew and Gentile alike, to show that new glory above; for even as He has received of His Father, so shall the Church receive (Rev. 2:26, 27).

Here the kingdom of heaven is not the outward external form, such as it appears to the world, but is the position and the estimation by God of those who are said, in verse 38, to be “the children of the kingdom;” not those who are nominally subjects in the kingdom, but are really the

children thereof. The Lord is speaking to His disciples alone, enters more deeply into the mysteries of the kingdom; not only gives the reason why the kingdom exists in mystery, but affords room for (without developing) the further and higher thought of the mystery of Christ and the Church. Away from the world and the multitude, none are noticed but the wheat—the children. They are said to be a treasure hid in the field; and for the sake of the treasure—or the heavenly saints—the field, or the world, is bought. The field is not bought for its own sake. It is not here a question of the universal offer of the Savior to the world; not of the declaration of the Lord, that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; but it is the elect of God who are taken up, and considered distinct from all others. This treasure was present and distinct from the field to the mind of God, before the field was bought. For its sake alone the man sold all that he had to purchase the field. The treasure in it could be possessed in no other way; or rather the purchasing of the field was the best way, in the wisdom of the man, to possess the treasure hidden therein. God, for the sake of those whom He foreknew, gave His only begotten Son, that by His death the treasure might be secured. The Church was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1; 4). Why was the Church chosen? It is according to His good pleasure. For the sake of the Church the world was bought.1 The great original purpose of God was the new creation of the Church; and all other creations are and were subordinate to this. God foreknew that Adam would fall. He foreknew all the dreadful consequences of that fall, the sin, the misery, the wretchedness of mankind. Why then was such a state of things allowed to continue? Why was not the contaminated and polluted world swept away into its original nonentity? Because it was the will of God, “his good pleasure,” from out of this so unpromising material, to gather souls and make His Church—and to make it pure and holy, through and in Christ; that it might be to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He path made us accepted in the beloved.

Here is the secret why the Church is called a treasure; not that it is anything in itself, but because it is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Every member of that Church is originally as vile and worthless as others; but they are washed and sanctified, renewed in mind, separate from the world, called to reflect the image of God, builded together as His habitation, through the Spirit, raised to the brotherhood of Christ, nay, to union with Him, as well as to be the sharers of His throne and kingdom, constituted kings and priests forever to God. And all this is by the exceeding riches of the grace of God; and the Church, composed of purged and sanctified men, is the manifestation of this grace, is the effect of the working of His mighty power to us-ward who believe. How could such grace be shown to us? Because of Christ dead, risen, and glorified. God could have created beings far beyond the capabilities and powers of man, and have established them in their holy state beyond the possibility of sin. He could have endowed them with wisdom, power, and intelligence beyond the power of human conception; and such would have been to the praise and glory of His wisdom and power. But that any should be to the praise of the glory of His grace, it was necessary that infinite love should be manifested to creatures utterly unworthy, yea, deserving of everlasting punishment, and eternal banishment from His presence. How could this be done consistently with the claims of divine justice! God devised the plan. Blood was shed. The Son of God became Son of man, and died to satisfy and establish divine justice, and the way was clear for the exhibition of grace. “Redeemed not with corruptible things,.... but with the precious blood of Christ.” But it is not merely redemption—this the Church shares in common with all other saints, past or future, Jewish or Gentile. The baptism of the Spirit, uniting with a glorious head in heaven, is that which gives the peculiarity to the saint of this dispensation; and upon this baptism, as the means, depends the Church's union with Christ, in the sense of being His body; and it is thus that being brought into the heavenlies, the Church exhibits the wondrous power and riches of divine grace, is the object of the Father's love, for the sake of Christ; is the fruit of the love of the Father for the Son; is the Father's gift to the Son. (John 17:9.) Here, then, is the treasure. No other could so abundantly show forth the riches of His grace; and because the Church does so glorify Christ, the Father loves and gives Christ to be head over all things to it. Not because the Church is anything of itself, but because it is the exhibition of God's grace, it is a treasure to Christ. The cross of Christ laid the foundation, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the means, by which the Church becomes the greatest result of redemption. Christ and the Church are one— “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” The highest glory, the nearest place to the person of Christ, in all heaven's hierarchy, is for the Church. It is by grace Christ's treasure, as He is, in every sense, the Church's treasure.

But if the Church is a treasure hid in the field, only God could discern it. From other scriptures we learn that the manifestation of the Church (i.e., in its perfect state) will not be in this world, or age, or rather, the manifestation will take place in the new age; for this will have closed when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, taking vengeance, &c., but then the Church will be revealed also (Col. 3:4). The manifestation of the sons of God, the Church, is an event for which all creation, animate and inanimate, are represented as earnestly waiting (Rom. 8:1; 9-23.) But this manifestation of the Church refers to the future glory, and is the term put to this hiding of our life in the passage above cited, viz., Col. 3:4, “Our life is hid with Christ in God,” &c. We hear in our day about an invisible Church, as if it were the will of God and the Church should he hidden now; but there is no scriptural warrant for such a thought. It is a sad and solemn fact that there are many of God's children who walk not as children of the light, and the Church corporately is not known as a distinct and separate body from the world. There may be a few here and there who endeavor so to walk in separation from evil, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; but alas, how few comparatively! But it does not appear from scripture that God designed the Church to occupy such a position, in which it could scarcely be distinguished from the world, but on the contrary, it does appear from scripture that the word “hid” refers to the past. Nowhere do we find the idea of an invisible Church as God's intention and desire. It was set up in broad day, in the face of all the languages assembled in Jerusalem, and in an instant the tongue of the unlearned was loosened, and gave testimony to the grace of God in the various languages to the astonished multitude. Enemies reviled, and said, “These are full of new wine.” There was no invisibility here. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another.” God designed that unity and love, after Christ's pattern, were to be the evidence to all men that they were his disciples. This is quite inconsistent with invisibility, save as the result of man's sin; for alas! here, as in every other position in which man has been placed, is failure. The Church as a body visible, is ruined; it is broken and split up into sects and parties, and in many cases the bitterest enmity exists between the rivals. Surely this is not what was intended. This cannot be the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, but because that presence has been denied, and human authority has usurped the place of the Spirit. The natural, necessary consequence is, that, till Christ comes, the lusts of the flesh and the power and subtlety of Satan have broken up and forever marred the visible unity of the Church upon the earth. “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” &c. It was the secret purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that from the race of men living in the world, and irrespectively of His governmental distinctions, He would at the proper time form His Church. This purpose was intimated when Christ came, and developed by the Spirit afterward. “On this Rock I will build my Church.” At the day of Pentecost God put his plan into execution. He began to build His spiritual house when the Holy Ghost descended upon the saints (Acts 2; 1-4). For the Church is not merely an assembly of believers, but an assembly formed into one body corporate, by the actual and personal presence of the Holy Ghost, who is just in the same sense present, as the Lord Jesus is now absent. This is the Church. It is evident that such a body could not exist previously, because that Christ had not ascended, and the Comforter could not come till Christ had gone up (John 14, et seq.) It is true, that many things in the old economy typified the Church, or rather, Christ's members, in certain respects; but it is equally true that the Lord revealed His assembly as his purpose, and that Paul was the chosen one to bring it fully

out. Eph. 2, Col. 1.

If the above view of the “hid treasure” be scriptural, it follows that a very prevalent idea as to its import must be incorrect and unscriptural, viz., that it signifies the religion of Christ in the soul—the effectual inward working of the Holy Spirit in the individual, and that it avers merely the fact that the communion existing between God and the believer is a thing utterly unknown to the world. Most certainly it is unknown to the world; but this is not what is contained in the parable. Doubtless too we have Christ as our Pattern and Exemplar; and as He gave up all for us, so we have the great principle taught us that we should give up all and everything for Christ; not in the way of quid pro quo, but “we love Him because He first loved us.” But this is not so much the direct teaching of the scripture before us, as it is impressed upon the mind by the Holy Ghost as a result which should be produced in us by the fact that “He sold all that He had and bought the field.”

The treasure, in the word, is not the Christianity of a soul, but the Christian body; not the treasure that the Church possesses in Christ, but the treasure that Christ has in the Church.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 5. In the House

The multitude are sent away, and Jesus goes into the house with His disciples. They say, “declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.” They had asked, (ver. 10,) “why speakest thou unto them in parables?” and the Lord's answer shows the awful position of the Jews. They were become a rejected people. Lo-ammi was written upon them. They had been a people separated to God. They had been a vineyard planted in a pleasant place, walled in. and kept apart from the surrounding Gentiles by rites and ceremonies of God's own instituting, by a law and ordinances of His giving, and righteousness was demanded of them. They failed in producing righteousness. God looked for grapes, and behold wild grapes. Prophets, the messengers of God, were sent to them; but like the husbandmen in the parable, (Matt. 21:33,) they “beat one, killed another, and stoned another.” Promise and threatening, blessing and chastisement, entreaty, expostulation, and reproach were all used, but in vain. The tenderest appeals were made by God. He reminds them of all that He had done to draw them to obedience, but they will not hear. What anxiety, if we may use the word, is seen in the messages sent through the prophets, that they might escape impending judgment! Everything necessary was there to maintain them in their exalted position, had they been obedient. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8). But the kingdom must be brought to them, that their rejection of it may be made public to the world. John the Baptist cried, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Repentance, confession, and baptism were the means pointed out by him for an entrance into, or preliminaries for, the kingdom. But him they beheaded. Jesus comes and preaches the advent of the kingdom. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He comes with His hands full of blessing; He gives numerous instances of His power and goodness; He went about “healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people,” casting out devils and banishing them from the land, samples of the blessing and the power of the kingdom, brought for their acceptance, but by them rejected. They would not have the kingdom with Christ. His citizens hated Him, saying, “we will not have this man to reign over us.” They ascribed His power, in casting out devils, to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (chap. 9). But Jesus still works in grace: it is not quite over with them yet. He sends His disciples to herald the coming of the kingdom in all their cities, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, forbidding them to go in the way of the Gentiles. Though they had rejected Christ, they had not yet publicly rejected them. But whether one lamented to them, they mourned not, or piped; they danced not; that is to say, in whatever way the testimony of God came, there was no response. The testimony of God was ever rejected by them, save by a remnant. The Pharisees seek to kill Jesus, and He hides Himself. They put the seal to their iniquity and condemnation in again ascribing His work to the prince of the devils (chap. 12:21). Now they are judged.

The Lord decidedly breaks with them. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in that to come; and Jesus severs the natural tie which connected Him, as the Messiah after the flesh, with them, and only acknowledges the relationship of obedience to His Father. They tell Him that His mother and His brethren desire to speak to Him. But who are His mother and brethren? He points to His disciples— “Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” This rejection of Jesus and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem cut short all God's dealings with them as a nation for the time. They were set aside, and a new work, as we have seen, was entered upon. Meantime judicial blindness is sent upon them, and the saying of Esaias the prophet is fulfilled. Therefore He speaks to them in parables. (See verses 11-15). Before this the Lord had not spoken in parables, but now that He is the rejected One, now that Israel is cut off for the time, He speaks in parables—none understand but they whom He instructs. And the disciples take the place which Jesus had marked out for them. He called them His mother, and sister, and brethren, and in the holy nearness and confidence of this position, they say not, “Why speakest thou in parables?” but “Declare unto us.” &c. They are now within the house in presence of their Lord—alone with Jesus—happy place!—the multitude, or world outside. The separation is marked and distinct. Now there is communion. And where else can the Christian enjoy communion, save in the presence of Jesus? But this is the Christian's place, and he may ever be in the house with Jesus.

Even when the outer man is necessarily occupied with the things of this life, with the bread that perisheth, the inner man may be enjoying secret communion with God. The question of sin settled, the conscience at peace, and the heart at liberty, then is God able, and delights as a Father, to commune with His children. He hides nothing from them concerning the glory of Jesus. He tells them the thoughts and counsels He had concerning Jesus and His Church before the foundation of the world. He opens out before their eyes the prospect of future glory, which He gives to Jesus, and which Jesus gives to them (John 17:22). Even concerning the judgment of the world, He reveals to them His purpose— “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Gen. 18:17.) “I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (John 15:15.) Dear reader, if you are a Christian, then, through the amazing grace of God, Jesus calls you His friend. He points to you as to His disciples of old, and says, “Behold my mother and my brethren.” To them, to us, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Mark the care of the Lord to instruct them fully, and to unfold the meaning of His parables. His world has its theories concerning the present age, and is forming plans for the future amelioration of its citizens, but how contrary to truth! Is not judicial blindness settling (as it certainly will) upon apostate Christendom, as it did upon apostate Israel? May we not say, on contrasting the prevailing doctrines and opinions of the mass in Christendom, what the Lord said of rejected Israel, “To them it is not given,” &c.?

But it is given; and accordingly the Lord not only explains the parable, but gives additional information. “The harvest is the end of the age;” and then at that time “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them

which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The parable speaks of "good seed." The Lord's explanation tells us the "good seed are the children of the kingdom." There we read of "tares," here "the children of the wicked one." There, "an enemy hath done this," here "the enemy is the devil." Then there are "reapers," here "the reapers are the angels. The servant wished to do the reapers' (the angels') work. Not so; the angels are the executioners of God's wrath. So does this teach us that it is not the province of the disciples of Christ, during His absence, and the time of His rejection, to do the work of judgment.

We are not taught to extirpate heresy and evil men by the strong arm of the sword; to do so is to depart from the proper place of the Christian. To bear testimony to Christ and against the evil, most assuredly; but to leave judgment in the hands of God, in the hands of Jesus; for, mark, He does not give up His title to the kingdom. Now He is patient and forbearing, but by and by He will send His angels, and they shall gather out of His KINGDOM all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. It is His kingdom yet, though an usurper reigns in His place. But He is coming, and will show "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Then the world, delivered from the thralldom of the oppressor, shall cease its groanings, and shall enjoy the rest and repose consequent upon the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:19.) "So shall it be at the end of the world." The phrase "end of the world" is frequently misunderstood. We are not taught that the harvest is the end of the world, the earth, but that it is the end of the dispensation or age which is characterized by the preaching of the kingdom (the true king, Christ, the Son of man, being rejected and absent, till He returns and establishes it in power and glory on the earth).

But the fact here communicated to the disciples was not given the multitude. In what was said to them everything took place in the field, in the world, excepting only the fact that the good seed would be taken out of it, and placed in the barn. It is a view of the present age. But in the house the Lord goes beyond the bounds of the present age, and we get a peep into the future one. There is the binding of the tares, the gathering of the wheat, the closing scenes of this age; but the curtain is lifted, and we have the terrible result of the judgment of the tares in the weeping and gnashing of teeth. On the other side, we behold the righteous shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. These are not established in the marred kingdom; it is in the kingdom of their Father that they shine; and this is the reason why there is no question of purging the field. There were better things reserved for us; and so we have now a new principle of the kingdom manifested, a principle with which the world outside has nothing to do. We have had the effects of the sowing, the facts of the mixing and the separation, and the consequent form of the kingdom. But now we have the hidden motive, a principle which is fully developed in the hearts of the "children of the kingdom," and which Jesus brings out in the two next parables.

The Lord, though rejected by His own, would have a people, and He secures the object of his desire at the expense of all besides. So it is a principle with him who acts according to the understanding of the purpose of God, that he will esteem nothing in comparison with Christ. The principle of giving up all for Christ would not have existed if Christ had not been rejected: the taking up the cross and following Christ was the necessary result of rejection. And accordingly we do not get this principle in the parables to the multitude. But Christ, for the sake of the wheat in the field, suffers the rejection of the mass which rejection serves to bring out a new light upon the kingdom, and a higher glory upon them that are His. They shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The use of the term "righteous" marks the saints of God in their individuality before and after the sowing of the seed. Deborah sang of this glory (Judg. 5:31), "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Daniel speaks of it also (chap. 12:2). It was a thought common to Old Testament saints. But no saint before was ever in the house with Jesus, none was before called "my brother, and sister, and mother;" and Jesus goes on unfolding more and more of the principles and purpose which actuate God during the present state of the kingdom. To us it is given to know them. May we be kept from our own thoughts about them.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 4. Leaven

IN the parable of the grain of mustard seed becoming a great tree, we have the kingdom of heaven as a power in the earth subduing other powers, and as such seeking prominency in the world. The rulers in it have had for their professed object the extension of the name of Christ, but this name in their hands was a means merely to exercise their own ambition. They sought to enlarge the bounds of Christendom, and succeeded in the attempt. In the prosecution of their design they have displayed the greatest energy and the most untiring zeal, they have evinced a readiness and aptitude to use all the appliances that the world could afford. The most astute policy has characterized the measures, framed by some, followed by most, which had for their aim the bringing of the temporal power to acknowledge the superiority of the spiritual. Sovereigns have been urged to oppress their subjects; subjects have been incited to rebel against their sovereigns; divide and conquer was the secret maxim which governed all their proceedings. The lust of earthly grandeur is discernible long before the secular power of the empire allied itself to the professing Church when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire. But this alliance once made, the corruption which adversity and persecution had in some degree held in check showed itself boldly; and flattery and intrigue, and all the arts that men use to obtain influence, were employed by those who claimed to be followers of the apostles, and to have the care of the Church. The kings of the earth were courted by the servants of Him whom these kings took counsel together to destroy. What a change came over the profession of Christianity! Christians are called to suffer NOW that they might reign THEN. But instead of suffering, the high places of the earth were coveted and obtained. Satan offered the glory of the world to Christ if He would worship him— "for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." (Luke 4:6.) Jesus would not have glory from the devil. But Christians have had this glory, Christians still enjoy and seek it. Who gave it them? By what means did they possess it? "To whomsoever I will I give it." Solemn thought! the power and the glory that Christ rejected the professing church greedily covets. We have societies composed of some real Christians, but for the most part of nominal Christians and worldlings, for the avowed purpose of propagating Christianity. They yield a something to each other. The one has civilization for his object, the amelioration of the world; the other yet professes to aim at Christianizing the world. But is civilization the (yea, an) object of the Christian missionary? Does he not call to separation from the world? "Let the dead bury their dead," &c. To spread the gospel and the truth is the work of the Christian, and of him alone; the means and the agencies employed should be Christian and not worldly. If the tares and the wheat join to promote Christianity, alas for the wheat! How can such concord exist? How can these two walk together?

Is it not that the place and calling of the Church of God has been forgotten, and the kingdom of heaven has rather become in men's apprehension a kingdom of the earth? If any ask why God permitted such confusion, there can be but one answer: the enemy sowed tares in the field; the work of the sower for the present was spoiled, and judgment was certain. But though known to God, it was not manifest to men, and the worldliness, the effect of the presence of the tares, must be made manifest; for it is the way of God to make evil manifest before

punishing it. The persecutions which the early Church suffered were lessons of God, and might have shown the antagonism of the world; but when these divine teachings were disregarded, and the spirit of the world still infected the professing body like an incurable disease, God gave it up to follow its own will, allowing it to fall into the world's arms—to become a mere vine of the earth, doomed to destruction. The true position of the Church, as the body and expression of the glorified Christ, was very soon lost. The Holy Ghost, as the animating and directing energy, was grieved, hindered, and practically denied; and by degrees earthly hopes began to displace the waiting for Christ from heaven. The barrier which the Lord had established to prevent the influx of worldliness being broken down, there was nothing to prevent the professing body, as a whole, from becoming thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the world; and the consequence was the substituting of a religion made up of Jewish ceremonies, heathen rites, and worldly principles, for the faith once delivered to the saints. This seems to be the leavening of the lump.

“Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,” &c. Here we have the kingdom presented, not as a secular worldly power, but as a principle or doctrine which thoroughly pervades all that is submitted to its influence. There are some who conceive this parable to be descriptive of the grace of God in the soul. But while the kingdom of God is said to be “righteousness and peace,” &c., it is never so said of the kingdom of heaven, which is always dispensational, and not moral merely. The kingdom of heaven is ever the kingdom of God, but the expression “kingdom of God” does not always mean “kingdom of heaven.” This parable, too, be it remarked, in common with those preceding, was spoken outside to the multitude, giving an external picture of the kingdom which sets aside another idea, viz., that the leaven is symbolical of real Christianity, spreading universally until the whole world be converted. But there is no such prediction respecting the gospel in the whole book of God; on the contrary, in the very first parable in. this chapter, out of four classes to whom the word is preached, there is only one class which brings forth fruit. It is inferred that the word will not be universally received. In the field the tares, as such, continue to the end; they do not become wheat. In the parable of the net, there were caught both good and bad fishes. All exhibit the same truth, that evil men will be found in every age up to the end. There are many passages in the Old Testament which foretell a time when all in Israel shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest; a time of all but universal blessedness. But nowhere is it said that this will be the effect of preaching only; other and far different means besides will he used to accomplish this. The unprejudiced mind may easily know that all these passages predicting future peace and happiness for the world refer to a future age, to be ushered in by judgment upon those that have not received the gospel. Another reason for rejecting the above interpretation is, that it gives to the symbol “leaven,” a meaning which it has nowhere else in scripture. Leaven never suggests the idea of anything good. Wherever used, it is symbolical of corruption. In the Mosiac economy all the types which have an especial reference to Christ were free from leaven. Where the worship of the saint was shadowed forth, there was leaven, as denoting the presence of the flesh, which though mortified, and by the energy of the Holy Spirit kept under, yet will ever be present while he is dwelling in this present world. It will only be when the mortal and the corruptible shall be changed into the immortal and the incorruptible, that worship shall be free from the effects of the flesh. So in its most virulent and worst forms, as exhibiting the extreme enmity of the unrenewed heart against God, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees is called leaven. We read too of the leaven of Herod. The apostle Paul speaks of the unleavened bread of sincerity, and here, by implication, leaven symbolizes hypocrisy. It may be remarked also, but with no desire to press it beyond its legitimate import, that the hiding of the leaven is not the act of the Lord.

The parable, then, presents the universal diffusion of the Christian religion within certain limits—not the growth of faith or the communication of life, which is rather represented by the wheat which took root in the ground; not the rise and progress of an ecclesiastic-secular power, “a great tree,” resembling the symbols of an Egyptian or Babylonish dynasty; but a definite sphere filled with the profession of Christ. It is the state of the kingdom which will bear a resemblance to the act of a woman who hides leaven in three measures of meal until the whole be leavened. To all but God the distinction between good and evil is lost. Outwardly it is an indiscriminate mass which bears the name of Christ. God simply shows us here the historical fact; and the external appearance is a lump thoroughly leavened. As the tree represented Christendom aspiring to power in the earth, so the leaven, spreading over the three measures of meal, sets forth Christian doctrine professed and propagated throughout a given sphere. It does not appear to be the design of the Lord to pronounce a moral sentence in these early parables to the multitude. Of course the spiritual man ought to judge of all things; but here the object is to represent such facts as meet the eye and mind of men outside. Nor have they failed to be observed, as will appear from the following passage of Guizot's History of Civilization in Europe— “The Church was a society regularly constituted, having principles, rules, and discipline of its own, and actuated by an ardent desire to extend its influence, and to vanquish its conquerors. Among the Christians of that epoch [when the barbarians broke up the Roman empire], in the ranks of the clergy, there where men who had pondered deeply upon all moral and political questions, who held fixed opinions and energetic sentiments upon all things, and strove strenuously to, propagate them and render them paramount. No society ever made such efforts as did the Christian church, from the fifth to the tenth century, TO EXTEND ITS SPHERE, AND SMOOTH THE EXTERNAL WORLD INTO ITS OWN LIKENESS. When we study its particular history, we shall perceive the full extent of its labors. It attacked barbarism, as it were, on all its sides, to civilize by subduing it.” This was just the leavening process going on under the hand of the “woman.” Alas! we know it was but the spread of corrupt Christianity; so that here, as elsewhere, the leaven had, in fact, its usual counterpart. Nor does even doctrine remain sound where there is the mere unhallowed desire of spreading profession, and where the heart is not subject to God, and purified by faith. Thus, throughout Christendom, systematic Judaizing became the rule, mingled with not a few accommodations of heathen rites and practices, in order to please the multitude and facilitate their so-called conversion.

The Church was regarded as an improvement and complement of the Jewish polity. Israel's restoration and future hopes were denied, and so the ruin was helped on; because the Gentiles began to regard the forfeited place of the Jews as their own. Thus becoming earthly, they rose in their own conceit, liable and sure in God's time to be cut off. (Rom. 11)

R. B.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 3. The Tree

In the parable of the tree, we have the representation of what the kingdom of heaven becomes in worldly greatness. That it is not what God intended is evident from the enemy's work recorded in the preceding parable. It must be borne in mind that the kingdom was presented to the responsibility of man; but he failed here, as everywhere else, where responsibility is in question. He slept; and while he slept the enemy sowed tares. Doubtless, it is for wise purposes that God permitted it, and all must result in the exaltation of His own grace; while at the same time, the fact that “men slept” proves the utter ruin and hopelessness of man in his natural state, and also that where anything depends upon

his faithfulness, nothing but loss and condemnation can follow. Tares being found sown among the wheat must necessarily alter the appearance of the field, and in God's judgment it is spoiled. The servants perceived the altered appearance, and wished at once to remedy the evil. But it was wholly beyond their power; and lest in the endeavor to remedy this evil, they should commit a greater (i.e., root up some of the wheat), they were not allowed to attempt it. It no doubt is matter of sorrow and deep humiliation to those who are instructed in the kingdom to see it thus marred; but, knowing the will of God concerning it, they are not to meddle with it, but to be separate from all that bears the form of evil. The tares will be bound in bundles to be burnt. Man may not deem them to be offensive—rather are they pleasing to him, for he naturally loves all that is hateful to God. Possibly he may imagine them pleasing to God, for his understanding is darkened. But they are the work of the enemy. The dispensation of the kingdom, then, as a whole, awaits the judgment of God; and the same doom awaits it as befell the dispensation that preceded (Rom. 11:17-24). It is already been observed that these similitudes of the kingdom are prophetic; and what is presented in the tree is the picture of the kingdom as it becomes subsequently to, and in consequence of, the presence of the tares among the wheat. “Kingdom of heaven,” and “Church of God,"1 do not signify the same thing precisely; they contain distinct ideas. But the calling of the Church takes place while the kingdom exists in mystery; and all the professors who are found in the field claim to belong, in some sort, to the Church. This greatly modifies the position of those comprehended within (if we may so say) the boundaries of the kingdom. Many things are true of God's Church (real members we here speak of) which cannot be predicated of the subjects of the kingdom, as such simply. The being members of Christ's body, the Church, or bride, involves privileges, and responsibilities too, which are beyond those of the kingdom merely; but, seeing they assume this position, they lie under increased obligations. More than this, it follows that the professing body is here under the similitude of a tree, and whatever the character, of the tree before God, such is the character of the nominal Church.

(Ver. 31.) “Another parable put he forth,” &c. The kingdom of heaven is symbolized by a grain of mustard seed, which becomes a great tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. We have not the explanation of both these symbols given us in this chapter; but we have them in God's book, which therefore alone furnishes the key by which we may unlock the meaning of this parable. To look elsewhere is to dishonor it and the Spirit of God. Every symbol in His word has also its meaning there. However contrary it may be to any cherished human theory, it behooves us to accept His explanation, and to reject every other. We find, in Ezek. 31:3-9, the Assyrian power compared to a great tree, a mighty cedar in Lebanon. His branches are fair, his boughs cast a broad shadow, in them the fowls of heaven make their nest, under them the beast of the field bring forth their young. “I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.” It is evident here that Assyria is a vast power, for great nations dwelt under his shadow. It is under the similitude of a tree; and the fowls that nestled in his branches, and the beasts that sought protection and shelter under them, are, according to the word of God, the surrounding nations. We do not enter into the moral character of the antitype. All that is necessary now to observe is that the tree typifies a towering earthly power.

Again, we have the prophecy of the Lord's kingdom established in power, under a similar image, (Ezek. 17:22-24) and here also is a place for fowl of every wing. This is the millennial kingdom described in Isa. 11—the Lord's earthly glory, when He will reign in righteousness and power, giving forth His law from mount Zion, and holding in subjection all nations. “All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord.” That the trees are here mentioned (i.e., the earth's grandees and powers) in connection with the tree of the Lord's planting is evidence that this prophecy looks forward to the millennium, when every power and Gentile dynasty shall recognize the superiority of the kingdom of the Son of David. In a word, this is the kingdom established in power (and not the mysterious form of the kingdom of heaven, which is the subject in the parables). But here, as in the former case, setting aside the moral character of the kingdom, it is a great power over the earth that is foretold. Turn now to Dan. 4. Here is Nebuchadnezzar himself under the similitude of a great tree. All the power of the kingdom was absolutely vested in his own person. More instances might be adduced; but these are sufficient to show that a tree in scripture is used to typify an earthly power, for good or ill.

Hence we conclude that the kingdom of heaven has assumed the aspect and the position of an earthly power; that is to say, the result of bringing in the Christian dispensation has been that men have availed themselves of Christianity, and have used the name of Christ, for the development of a vast hierarchical power, for the establishment of a kingdom, which as represented by the tree, has shot forth its branches and extended itself far and wide. Shelter, protection, and a habitation are given to the birds of the air (“they lodge in the branches thereof”); and this is dignified with the name of the “Church of God."2

And if we take ever so cursory a view of Christendom, (which we take to be the wheat and tare field,) the connection between the nations and powers of the world, and the nominal church, is plain. The so-called church lends her influence and authority to the rulers of the world, and they use the name of Christ to further their own political views, to extend their own power, and to crush that of their opponents, whether these opponents are professed enemies to the name of Christ or not. Does not history furnish abundant proof? Has not the pathway of the nominal Church, ever since its first union with the world in the person of the emperor Constantine, been a systematic grasping at the things of the world, seeking for power, for wealth, for worldly influence, for connection with the rulers of the world; yea, to hold even them under authority! What do we see now in Europe? The last was originated in a dispute about the so-called “holy places” in Jerusalem. The pretensions of the Emperor of Russia to the protectorate of Christians in Turkey are well known, as is the claim of the French Emperor to represent the Latin Church. All are agreed that the ruling motives were aggrandizement of self and extension of empire. Need we allude to things nearer home—the pronouncing of blessings upon soldiers, and arms, and banners? What is this but using the name of Christ for mere political purposes A mighty engine it once was, and may yet be, to move the populace, and to make the desires of ambition popular. But in the sight of God, of Christ, whose name is thus dishonored, how awful! That which calls itself by the name of Christ is extending its branches, seeking to be identified with every movement in the world, inviting the birds of the air to take shelter in its branches, and saying, I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow. There may be no necessity for supposing that such an earthly power as a tree represents is wicked in the abstract. Other circumstances will determine whether it be a good or an evil. But when the Church, whose calling is not earthly, but heavenly, whose city is not formed by hands but built and made of God, which is called to be separate from the world—it crucified to the world and the world crucified to it, then we perceive that connection with earthly power becomes a positive departure, an apostasy.

Alas! the professing church is a part of the world, enjoys its power and ease, seeks its emoluments and honors. To say nothing of Romanism, which is a professed ruler over secular powers, do not the Protestant bodies covet and contend eagerly for the prizes of the earth? Do we not see the means and appliances of the world brought to bear upon the extension of what they call Christianity? True, we are told that the “silver and gold,” which Christendom boasts in now, is gathered for the extension of the gospel; but is this the divine way of spreading the good news? When the Lord commissioned His disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, did He mean them to raise funds from the Gentiles? Doubtless, it is the duty of the Church of God to provide for the wants of those who preach and teach, if needy; but

does the going about and begging of the world a maintenance show faith or love? Is this the teaching of Gal. 6, or 1 Cor. 9, or 3 John? And then what a complicated machinery! How full of earthly contrivances! Past history and present facts confirm the prophetic view given in the parable.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 2. The Seed

The question may be asked, Why are the hearts of some compared to good ground, when the scripture teaches, that all hearts are “deceitful and desperately wicked?” Not because there is anything naturally good therein. Facts only are presented here; the operating cause is not; it is simply the fact of the preaching of the word, and the reception of it.

In some cases there is brutish insensibility, or cold indifference; in others, a paramount love for, or fear of, the world. All this may, in the natural man, be owing to, or at least aggravated by, constitutional and educational differences; but in all cases, without the preparation of the heart by the Holy Ghost to receive the word, there would be unfruitfulness.

While, then, on the one hand, there is no intimation of the grace which prepares the heart (which is quite outside of man's exertion or intelligence) so that it becomes like the good ground, on the other, nothing is said as to the cause of the rejection of the word. Our Lord does say, “They had no root;” but even this is matter of fact rather than the cause. Man is responsible for the reception of the word; and his responsibility comes out prominently here. (ver. 9.) That which the Spirit of God does present is first the preaching of the word, then its reception, or rejection, as the case may be; and this quite distinct from the secret spring which operates to produce reception.

(Ver. 24.) “Another parable,” &c. In the preceding parable we have the word of the kingdom; the good seed has been sown, the gospel has been preached. The kingdom of heaven is now begun. We are carried forward in advance of the moment when the Lord was speaking. The kingdom commenced when Jesus had ascended (i.e. the mysteries of the kingdom); it will only be when He comes again, that the kingdom will be established in power. We have now presented to us three pictures of the kingdom under three different aspects, but all of them external. The standpoint whence we view it is the earth. We have had a parabolic description of the introduction of Christianity into the world. A new order of things was then about to take place, a new dispensation, where the visible glory of God would not be manifested as it had been in the holy of holies within the veil of the temple, but the establishment of a kingdom on the earth to be under the rule of Christ Himself dwelling in heaven. But this kingdom would be marred and spoiled by the enemy; yet would men profess to have Christ for their king. MYSTERIES truly!—man, calling himself a Christian, in league with the world that rejected and crucified the King, condemning the world that did it, yet loving the world, and denying the right and the truth of the King coming again to take what is His own. “Why speakest thou.... in parables?” Because it is not given to the multitude, to those outside, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

And in the present hour the kingdom of heaven is a mystery to the world. Only those inside, in the house, can know them. Before the multitude our Lord proceeds to give an account of the kingdom, a parabolic and prophetic description of it, right on to the end, when the mysteries will cease, and there will be the open and visible establishment of it in power. The Lord does not speak of the Father's purpose in permitting such an anomalous state of the kingdom to exist. Of this He spoke to His disciples in the house, when the multitude were sent away. There He speaks to them anticipatively of their future position, and calling while yet on the earth, viz., destined for heavenly places. They were told of their existence in the purpose of God before the world was, that they in their corporate capacity were a treasure to Him, yea, “one pearl of great price.” It is only when we are in the house with Jesus, that we can enter into the views of the kingdom unfolded in the last three parables contained in this chapter. But previously (verses 1-33) the Lord sits by the sea-side, outside for the multitude, and He gives them three distinct pictures of the kingdom of heaven, the first of them terminating with the end. It is worthy of notice that the Lord gives us the plain teaching of two of His parables, which is a divine assistance to a right understanding of the others. In the parable of the tares and the wheat, the distinction between the real and the merely nominal professor is preserved. There are real disciples in the marred kingdom, as well as in the field there is wheat. Their entire separation takes place only in the end. In the parables of the tree and of the leaven, this distinction is not noticed; it is the general character of the kingdom. It would seem as if the wheat, the children of the kingdom, bear so small a proportion to the tares, that they fail to give a general character to it: they are apparently lost sight of. In fact the tree exhibits the kingdom of heaven as a great earthly power, and the leaven presents us with its doctrinal character. The position of the children, even their existence, is not noticed in these two.

Let us look a little at the tare-field. The good seed is sown by the Son of man, and the field is the world, i.e., it is the place where the kingdom is established. All that is good is the work of the Son of man; all that is evil in the work of the enemy. The tares do not represent all the evil that is in the world, but all the evil in connection with the kingdom. They have been brought into the field (the world) among the wheat, by the arch-foe, for the very purpose of marring the work of the Lord. But although the outward aspect of the kingdom be spoiled, yet the purpose of God in permitting it—nay, strange, but sweet truth, the very purpose of God which was (to speak as men) contingent upon the rejection of the King, and the mysteries of the kingdom—was entirely beyond the reach, if not the ken, of the enemy; for the word of God cannot fail— “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” Let the external character of the kingdom be ruined, yet in it, though hidden, there shall be found those who are in reality “the children of the kingdom.” But it is a solemn truth that the character which the kingdom takes is from those “who profess and call themselves Christians,” and of these professors so outnumbering are the tares, that the entire aspect of the kingdom is spoiled, and no longer exhibits that which it ought to have exhibited, viz., that which would correspond to the Sower and to the seed. The term professor is used in its most extensive application. The true disciple is symbolized by wheat, evil men by tares. These evil men are not at first visible, but by and by they are developed. “When the blade sprung up, then appeared the tares also;” and this state of things is to continue, for the tares are not to be gathered up, they are to grow with the wheat, until the harvest. So long as the present dispensation lasts, so long will there be evil and wicked men found in connection with Christianity, enjoying the outward blessings and privileges which it confers, and even in some instances professing actual discipleship to Christ. How very soon the tares appeared even during the lives of the apostles! What a character is theirs, as portrayed by Peter, by Jude, and by Paul, who tells us that the mystery of iniquity was working in his time! In the end there will be the full development of it, after the hindrance is removed (2 Thess. 2). It is not intended to assert that “that wicked” will arise out of the professing church, although it may be so, but out of that confused and heterogeneous mass, resulting from the unholy union which now subsists between the world and the professing church.

True, there is a company of real disciples—the children of the kingdom. They are warned of the tares: the doom of Christendom is made known to them, a doom far more fearful than that of apostate man in any other dispensation. The tares will be bound in bundles for the fire. But there is a hope for the children of God, the good seed. They shall escape, and be out of the great tribulation.

These, however, as distinct from the mere professor, are not under consideration in this parable. The territory embraced within the limits of the kingdom, is that which is called Christendom, and it is those dwelling within those limits that give character to the kingdom. It is a mixed character, and such it must remain. The servants to whom the keeping of the field was entrusted fell asleep; and meanwhile the enemy sows tares: when they awake, they essay at once to remedy the evil which had crept in by their unwatchfulness. Nay, says the Lord, “lest ye root up also the wheat.” Behold, here, the tender care that the Lord takes of His own! Rather than one single ear of wheat should be injured or pulled up before it was ripe, let the tares grow; rather than the little body of true believers should be broken up in its infancy, ere the Bride he ready for the Bridegroom, let the judgment upon the wicked be suspended. The true sons of the kingdom must be perfected, whose names were written in the book of life before the world was. The Lord could not come in judgment before these are all secured. Therefore the servants are not allowed to act in judgment.1 Let the tares alone. The children of God now stand in grace, and only grace must they exhibit; they have nothing at all to do with earthly judgment. Let the tares alone. If they could not keep the tares out, when the field was free from them, much less can they root them out now— “Lest ye root up also the wheat.”

Is not this same care for His people seen in the long respite vouchsafed to the antediluvians? Not only is the long-suffering of God seen, who bore long with the sinners before the flood, and gave them space for repentance, when even every day that Noah worked at the ark, and every plank, and every nail, and every stroke of his hammer, was a warning, and a threatening of the impending judgment; but God could do nothing till Noah was safe in the ark, after He Himself had shut him in: even then there was a respite of seven days (perfect forbearance). But if Noah had been as long again, until he was shut up safe in the ark, so long would judgment have been delayed.

So also in the case of the five cities of the plain. Lot must be provided for before the fiery storm could descend. The Lord said He could do nothing till Lot was gone out of the city, and the little city Zoar was spared for his sake and at his entreaty. For the sake of the righteous the wicked are spared. “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Had there been ten righteous men found in those five cities, they had been spared. And the world is now preserved because the children of God are in it, for “he is not willing that any should perish,” and all these, the true Church, must and will be taken out of it before judgment descends upon it. Then will the tares be not bound merely, but burnt; but the wheat will have been secured in the barn.

We have, then, this fact, that whatever phase the kingdom may present to the world, there will be some. good in it. Nothing is here said as to the amount of good or evil—simply that both are there; that they are really distinct the one from the other; but that this distinction will be made fully manifest only in the harvest.

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13, Parables in Matthew 13, Thoughts on the: 1. The Seed

The rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the Jews, and their being cast off in consequence, for a season, was the occasion, foreseen by God, of bringing to pass His gracious purpose, that salvation should be offered to all men, whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus takes to Himself a new name, and fills new offices. Servants had been sent to the husbandmen keeping the vineyard, and at last the Son: we know how they were treated. “He came to his own [things], and his own [people] received him not.” The miracles, which He wrought in their sight, were by them attributed to Satanic power; and the unpardonable sin was committed in blaspheming the Holy Ghost. Had they received Him, doubtless the kingdom would have been immediately established, and the Son of David would have sat upon the throne of David. But “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” and they would not have Jesus to reign over them. Does judgment immediately overtake them? No: their sin opened the floodgates for the display of God's most wondrous grace. He is about to gather some of every clime, and, by the operation of His Spirit, to unite them into the Church, in which the names of Jew and Gentile should not be known, where there is neither Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free; where there is only one bond of union, but that the most intimate—Christ the Bridegroom, and the Church the bride; He the Head, she the body; each individual a member of this body, and all members one of another, where the Holy Ghost Himself, by His actual presence, and personal indwelling in each saint, is the bond. There is formed and exhibited a union such as the Lord Himself referred to when He prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Meantime the earthly kingdom is in abeyance—the kingdom, of which Isaiah gives the moral picture in chaps. 11, 12; of which Ezekiel gives the sacred and metropolitan relations in the latter chapters of his prophecy, viz., the service of the temple, &c. the manifestation of the visible presence of God in a higher degree than was effected by the Shechinah of old, insomuch that the name of the city shall be “the LORD is there.” Daniel, also, gives its external relations with other kingdoms—if the term might be used, I would say the political aspect of the kingdom. It breaks up and destroys the Gentile powers. The Stone smiths the image, and the wind carries away the very dust of it, and every vestige is effaced. “He shall be king over all the earth.” This kingdom, we repeat, is postponed that the heirs may be gathered for heavenly glory.

How great the love of our God! He became poor that we might be made rich. He put in abeyance His glory as God, the ever blessed second person of the Trinity. He gave up His power, and dominion, and government, and majesty as the heir of David's throne, as king of Israel, and as He whose name should be honored among the Gentiles, that there might be associated with Him, in His future glory, a Bride who is to pass through the same sufferings (save that of atonement,) to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, then to be presented perfect to the Bridegroom, free from all taint of sin, spotless, and holy. Oh, if every Christian did but know and act up to his glorious calling! How soon might we not hail His return, and the rapture of the saints!

But to return to our chapter—Christ comes not to the vine, the symbol of the Jewish nation in its religious aspect, seeking fruit, but commences a new work. He is a sower going forth to sow.

The first parable is not said to be a similitude of the kingdom. The seed is called the word of the kingdom, and the effect produced upon different characters is illustrated by the seed falling upon different ground. The opposition which the seed—the word -meets with is shown also: “Some fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and gathered them up.” The Lord explains, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received

seed by the way-side.” The truth of God makes no impression on his mind, which is under the power and dominion of the father of lies—the power of death. It is an exceedingly desperate case. The soul is completely in Satan's hands, and appears to be the farthest removed from the life-giving power of the word of God—of the word of Him who is the resurrection and the life. The second case is equally bad, though apparently not so unpromising. The seed is received into stony ground: such are they who receive the word joyfully, but yet with the mind and feelings merely. The intellect may admire the truth, so far as it is understood; the natural affections of the heart may be acted upon by the exhibition of a crucified Savior; but it is a superficial reception. The truth, though admired, is not permitted to search the soul, and to probe the conscience, and (resting only in the affections and understanding which are but “the flesh”) no wonder that when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, such are offended. The hindering power in the third case is equally clear. The cares of this age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, are all of the world, and opposed to the Father. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,”

There is exhibited in these three instances the antagonism of the devil, the flesh, and the world, to the word of the Lord. There was the death-stupor of the first, no feeling, no apprehension of the truth, without understanding, like the beasts that perish. There was immediate joyful acting in the second, but the conscience was not reached. The necessity of self-abasement was not felt, and, for the time, opposition was dormant. But when self-denial was called for, when it became necessary to take up the cross, then the fleshly love of ease rose up in opposition; and they are “offended,” notwithstanding the partial light and understanding—so inveterate is the enmity between the flesh and the Spirit. The lust of the eye and the pride of life, developing themselves in the cares of this world and in the deceitfulness of riches, show their antagonism to the life-giving word in the third case. All are opposed to God; and though this opposition is manifested in different ways, yet are they all in the end fatal and destructive. Perhaps we may see, in these three cases, the opposition that is manifested to the Son, as administering the power of the kingdom against the wicked one; to the Spirit, as overcoming or detecting the workings and deceitful power of the flesh; to the Father, in contrast with the love of the world. For the way-side hearer is quite enthralled by the power of death and Satan; the stony ground bearer shows the flesh lusting against the Spirit; and the hearer choked with the cares, &c., of this world exhibits the love of the world as an antagonistic principle to the love of the Father. The devil, the flesh, and the world, combine to oppose the Son, the Spirit, and the Father—the Three-one God.

The good-ground hearer is the exact opposite of the way-side hearer: the latter does not understand, the former does. In the two other cases there is the appearance, but not the fruit. Here we have the manifestation of the power of God, by which the devil, the flesh and the world are overcome; and according to their subjection to the word sown in their hearts, they bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some an hundred fold. Has this threefold division of the good-ground hearers any reference to the three powers of opposition? In the progress of the believer from the power of death to the full enjoyment of the life of God, the Son, the Spirit, and the Father all work. We do not mean that the believer progresses from knowing the Son to the Spirit and the Father; but if the believer, although passed from death to life, through the application of the atoning blood of Christ, does not in all things yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is not he so far under the power of the flesh? Is he not carnal? (Compare 1 Cor. 1; 3) And if so, how can be enjoyed, and how manifested that supreme love of the Father, which is seen' only by and in those who are practically crucified to the world, and the world to them? Is it not true that the love of the world exposes us to yield to the flesh, and that the yielding to the flesh tends to bring under the power of Satan?

Bible Treasury: Volume N3, Matthew 11:28

These are not the words of a mere man, but rather of One, Who, however lowly, always spoke as befitted Him, Who is both God and man. They are in short the words of a divine Person speaking with divine authority. There are no words like them save His own, search where we will in the records of antiquity. And it is needless to say that the same may be asserted of the sayings of all moderns. No doubt we are in less danger of overestimating those who have lived near our own time, with whose foibles too we are perhaps somewhat acquainted. Such do not loom large to the imagination through the mists of time. But for all their detachment from our familiar scrutiny, and our consequent tendency to put the very highest value on their words, no statements of the great men of old can match, nay, even approach, the divine definiteness, the calm majesty, of our Savior's utterances. It is not that poets and philosophers, particularly the poets, did not say wise and true things sometimes; but obviously their whole attitude was different. Their language was speculative, tentative, and unauthoritative, whenever it went beyond a doubtless often eloquent lamentation over man's impotence.

Such were not our blessed Lord's words. Nay, while it is undoubtedly true that the writings of a Paul or a Peter or a John are, as parts of scripture and inspired by the Holy Ghost, equally authoritative, at the same time every believer must feel the peculiar charm that attaches to the words of our Lord, even over the rest of the Bible. One might add too that the peculiar solemnity of His warnings must be similarly felt. In truth, whether it be words of gracious entreaty or of solemn warning, all is, so to speak, “raised to the highest power,'' if one may be permitted a mathematical expression. “Never man spake like this man.” Hence the exceeding perplexity of such as cannot but own the majesty of our Lord's words, but yet refuse to bow to Him as God manifest in the flesh. Hence the appellation of “Enigma of the ages” that some thinker has given to Him. No enigma is He to those that believe, that acknowledge Him to be “the true God and eternal life.” Rather is it an enigma that men should hear such words, should be told of such a Savior, and not bow to Him Truly life itself is an enigma apart from Him. He alone unlocks the mystery of what a great poet called “this unintelligible world.” He proves Himself, as one as said, the true key because it fits every ward of the lock. He also lights up what were otherwise so dark, and “makes life a lucid story.”

Now nowhere are our Lord's words loftier than in this very verse. He holds language that no mere man might dare adopt. I am aware that an able writer, recently deceased, whittled down the words to mean a mere receipt for taking life calmly as if Christ had said, “Take life as I do; do not worry; do not resent circumstances.” No doubt all this will result practically in proportion as the Christian follows his Master, and takes His yoke upon him. But it is absurd as well as profane so to limit the meaning of this sublime appeal. Nay, it is a divine call as serious as it is gracious and blessed: blessed for him, who accepts; most serious for such as refuse. Remark that we have not here so much the divine Mediator. Indeed that all-important function of the Lord Jesus, so infinitely august, and the basis of all, is not the special point; but our Lord bids the weary and heavy-laden to come to Himself. “Come unto Me.” For to come to Him was to come to God. The whole meaning is there. And so He goes on, “And I will give you rest.” There is a special emphasis on the “I,” impossible so to give in English save by the living voice, but which by a simple device of language, familiar to every scholar, is apparent in the Greek original. There is the same stress, eight times, I think, repeated, in the well-known “Sermon on the mount,” where the Lord contrasts the limited spirituality of the Mosaic dispensation with

His, with God's, uncompromising holiness.

The details of the gospel are not here of course. Cavilers, alas! have not been slow in trying to represent apostolic doctrine as an after-thought, and as not in the mind of Christ. Never was there a greater mistake or a more serious one. The answer is simple. I give it in the words of an able divine, “Christ did not come so much to preach the gospel; He came that there might be a gospel to preach.” R. B.

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