

THE  
**PARABLES**  
Of  
JESUS CHRIST  
**EXPLAINED.**

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Whoso reads let him understand - Matt. 24:15.

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MY DEAREST B----

You already know and value this Book in its original form of question and answer.

It was written by a revered friend of your mother's and mine; who, as he was in the practice of catechising the children of his parish, probably found such a form most useful for that purpose. For reading, however, and especially for reading aloud, I have often wished it were free from this interruption; and I now venture to reprint it with this single alteration, and offer it to you with the best wishes of your affectionate

AUNT.

March, 1851.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE word parable is derived from a Greek verb, signifying to compare, and therefore it means a comparison made between things in their own nature different, but which yet in some points have a resemblance to each other.

The parables of Jesus Christ differ from other parables or comparisons in this respect, that they are not mere comparisons, but real agreements or correspondences between the things compared; thus they are the agreements or correspondence between things natural and things spiritual.

These agreements or correspondences are founded in the eternal laws of creation, by which it is appointed that all natural things and objects shall be the representative images and figures of those spiritual and eternal realities in which they originate, and that thus the universal world of creation, with all its parts, may be a representative theatre of that eternal world from which it is derived, and with which it is in perpetual connexion. When Jesus Christ, therefore, spoke in parables, He expressed eternal spiritual truths relating to His kingdom, under images of natural things relating to the kingdom of this world, and in this figurative language impressed those truths more beautifully and affectingly on the minds of His hearers than He could have done in any other way.

This mode of speaking answered a double purpose; first, in communicating to His humble and sincere disciples the lessons of Eternal Truth in the most significant and impressive language; and, secondly, by concealing Truth from others who were not in a disposition to receive and profit by it, and who, consequently, might have suffered injury by its reception.

It may seem a strange assertion, that man can suffer injury from admitting the truth into his understanding, but it is nevertheless true, for he has no greater enemy than the Eternal Truth, if he be not in a disposition to form his life accordingly, by rejecting those evils which the truth makes manifest, and by cherishing those graces and virtues which the truth recommends, and, at the same time, communicates; Jesus Christ therefore says, *"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."* (John iii. 19.) In receiving, therefore, into our understandings the knowledge of the Eternal Truth, we receive either life or death; life, if we suffer it to influence our wills, and conduct us to the possession of the Supreme Good, which is the love of God and our neighbour; and death, if we suffer it to remain fruitless, by burying it under the mire and clay of our natural evils, unforsaken and unrepented of.

It is said, (Matt. xiii. 34, Mark iv. 34.) that Jesus Christ spake nothing without a parable, from which we are plainly taught, how important it is to understand the parabolic language of Scripture, if we would be "wise unto salvation;" and the object of the following explanation is, that the devout reader of the Holy Word may have an enlightened and spiritual discernment of the divine things contained in the parables of our Saviour God, in order that his mind may be more opened to receive and to love the things of heaven and eternal life.

## THE PARABLES

The Wise and the Foolish Builder.	6
A Piece of New Cloth on an Old Garment, &c.	11
Children Sitting in the Markets.	13
The Sower.	17
The Weeds in the Field.	21
The Grain of Mustard Seed.	25
The Leaven.	26
The Treasure Hid in a Field.	27
The Merchant-man Seeking Goodly Pearls.	28
The Net Cast Into the Sea.	30
The Instructed Scribe.	32
The Summary of the Internal Sense of the Foregoing Parables,	33
Not That Which Goes Into the Mouth Defiles.	34
The King That Would Take Account of His Servants.	37
The Householder Who Hired Labourers Into His Vineyard.	40
A Certain Man Who Had Two Sons.	46
The Householder Who Planted a Vineyard.	50
The Marriage of the King's Son.	55
The Fig Tree.	64
The Ten Virgins.	66
The Man Travelling Into a Far Country.	70
The Man Who Cast Seed Into the Ground, Etc.	75
The Blind Leading the Blind.	80
A Certain Creditor Which Had Two Debtors.	83
The Good Samaritan.	87
The Friend Visited at Midnight.	91
The Rich Man Whose Ground Brought Forth Plentifully.	95
Let Your Loins Be Girded About, and Your Lights Burning.	99
The Fig Tree in the Vineyard.	105

The Man Invited to a Wedding.	107
The Man Intending to Build a Tower, and of the King Going to War Against Another King. 111	
The Lost Sheep.	117
The Lost Piece of Silver.	120
The Prodigal Son.	124
The Unjust Steward	131
The Rich Man and Lazarus.	139
The Servant Ploughing or Feeding Cattle.	144
The Unjust Judge.	148
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.	151
The Good Shepherd.	155
The Vine and the Branches.	159
Daily Prayer	165

# THE PARABLES EXPLAINED.

## THE PARABLE OF

## THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH BUILDER.

Matt. 7:24-28.

*Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

By the sayings of Jesus Christ are to be understood the words which he spoke, and which contained the whole of his Divine Love and Wisdom in close conjunction. Thus the sayings of Jesus Christ are to be regarded as the complex of all divine good and divine truth, intending to form in man the divine image and likeness, by opening in him the kingdom of Heaven, by purifying him from all his natural evils, by restoring him to the form and order of Heaven, and by finally leading him to an eternal conjunction of love and of life with the God of Heaven.

A distinction is made in the above parable between hearing and doing. Let us examine the ground and meaning of this.

By hearing the sayings of Jesus Christ is to be understood their reception in the memory and understanding, where they appear and are stored up under the form of truths; but by doing them, is to be understood their reception in the will, or love, and their consequent operation on the thoughts, words, and works of the devout receiver of them. Thus hearing the sayings of Jesus Christ denotes their admission into the external man or mind only, by virtue of which the external thoughts, words, and works are in a measure directed and controlled; whilst doing the sayings of Jesus Christ denotes their admission into the internal man or mind, by virtue of which admission, interior evils are seen and combatted, interior goods are manifested and exalted, and thus the whole man, both internal and external, is brought into submission to, and conformity with the divine love and wisdom.

All the comparisons applied by Jesus Christ are to be regarded not as mere comparisons only, but as agreements or correspondences between the things compared; which agreements or correspondences were established at creation, and are the results of the relationship subsisting between things spiritual and things natural, in consequence of the derivation of the latter from the former, and thus of their constant connection with each other. The comparisons, therefore, applied by Jesus Christ, differ from other comparisons principally in this respect, that they are comparisons, or agreements and correspondences, between things natural and things spiritual; whereas other comparisons are comparisons only between things natural, which bear some kind of resemblance to each other. When Jesus Christ therefore says, I will liken him to a wise man which built his house upon a rock, he means to declare the existence, not only of a similitude between the two cases, but of a real agreement or correspondence, and this of such a nature, that, when considered in reality and truth, the things compared are the same. Thus, in the present

instance, the things compared are a person who hears the sayings of Jesus Christ and does them, and a person who builds his house upon a rock. When, therefore, Jesus Christ says, that these persons are like each other, he intended to mark, by the most significant terms, the proper character of the person who hears and does these sayings, and to say, not only that he resembles a person who builds his house on a rock, but also that he really and virtually is such a person, which will be further evident from the consideration of what is to be understood by building a house upon a rock.

By the house here spoken of, is manifestly to be understood a spiritual house, which is no other than the interior and exterior mind of man, who is called a house in consequence of being the habitation, not only of the man himself, that is to say, of his supreme love, with all its derivative affections and thoughts, but also of the Lord himself, with his divine love and wisdom, together with all the angelic host, who constitute his eternal kingdom. This house is said to be built upon a rock, whenever man opens his mind to the reception of the divine truth of the Most High, and especially to that highest and most sublime truth, the manifestation of God in the flesh, or his revelation of himself in the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ. For in the Sacred Scriptures all truth is called a rock, by reason of its consistency and durability, and the term is applied pre-eminently to Jesus Christ as being the Supreme Truth, agreeably to his own declaration, where he says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). The first step, therefore, towards building this spiritual house is to believe in Jesus Christ as the Supreme God, and thus, as the source and fountain of all divine truth, and the building is afterwards advanced and perfected, in proportion as man forms his mind and his life in agreement with the precepts of Jesus Christ, and especially of that most edifying and purifying precept, to shun all evil as sin against that Great and Holy God.

But it is said that *the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house*.

The rain, the floods, and the winds, here spoken of, are to be understood spiritually, or according to a spiritual idea, because they are here mentioned as beating upon a spiritual house; and by rain, according to a spiritual idea, is meant the assault of false principles and persuasions in their opposition to the truths and precepts of the revealed wisdom of the Most High; by floods, a destructive accumulation of those principles and persuasions; and by winds, the infernal influences with which they are in continual connection, and from which they derive all their activity, force, and overwhelming operation. By rain, indeed, and by wind, when applied in a good sense, as the terms frequently are applied in the Sacred Scripture, is to be understood the descent of the heavenly doctrine of truth and wisdom, operative under the influence of the power and spirit of the Most High; but in the present instance the two terms are manifestly applied in an opposite, or bad sense, and accordingly denote, as was said above, the assault and operation of false and destructive principles and persuasions infused by the powers of darkness.

The term beating, has relation to the assault made by false principles and persuasions against the principles and persuasions of heavenly truth in the human mind, and therefore it relates to a state of trial or temptation, which is necessary for all to undergo, before the principles and persuasions of heavenly love and wisdom, or, what is the same thing, of heavenly goodness and truth, can be fully fixed and confirmed in the mind and life of man.

It is afterwards said of the house, when thus beaten by the rain, the floods, and the winds,

*that it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

By falling, applied to a spiritual house, is to be understood the separation or disjunction of the house, and of all things contained in it, from the divine love and wisdom of Jesus Christ: for when this is the case, the house then of necessity falls, since it is then placed only under the rule and government of selfish and worldly love, which love, in respect to heavenly love, is grovelling and debased, and destitute besides of all order, strength, and consistency necessary for the support of a spiritual building. When, therefore, the house, as in the present case, is said not to fall, the expression was intended to denote, that what is signified by the house was still kept in conjunction with the divine love and wisdom of Jesus Christ, and consequently, that the trial, or temptation, signified by the beating of the rain, the floods and the winds, had produced no other effect than to strengthen the foundations of the house. For such is the nature of all opposition from the powers of darkness, when exercised on the well-disposed mind, that, instead of destroying, it strengthens the heavenly principles which it assaults, by bringing those principles more into exercise, by leading man into deeper humiliation, and by thus elevating him to a closer conjunction with the powers of heaven and their God than could otherwise have been effected. The Almighty, therefore, permits such opposition on account of the end which is accomplished by it, and which is no other than the more radical purification and regeneration of his children, agreeably to his own declaration, where he says, *You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy* (John 16:20).

By the rock, as was shown above, is to be understood the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or the Incarnate God, together with all the truth, or wisdom, which proceeds from him; and the nature of man's connection with this Lord and Saviour is such, that if he be wise to open his mind to the reception of him, and of the heavenly principles of life and love which proceed from him, by renouncing all the evils which are in opposition to those principles, he then connects himself with the Omnipotence of that Great God and Saviour, and thus cannot perish, since *none is able to pluck him out of that Saviour's hand* (John 10:28). Whenever, then, man is wise to build his house upon this rock, he may console himself with the blessed conviction, that it can never fall, but is that house not built with hands, of which it said, *that it is eternal in the heavens* (2 Cor. 5:1).

We have now considered what is meant by the sayings of Jesus Christ, and what by hearing and doing them. The meaning, therefore, of hearing and not doing them is plain: but we have yet to seek the reason why the man, who hears them, and does them not, is *like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand*.

He is like a foolish man, because he is a foolish man, agreeably to what is said above concerning the Lord's comparisons; and therefore the Lord would here teach that this is the essence of all folly, to hear his sayings and not to do them; in other words, to acquire speculative knowledge of holy things in the memory and understanding, without suffering that knowledge to influence the life and conversation. And this folly Jesus Christ further marks by the significant expression of building the house upon the sand. For sand, we know, is a strong substance, without coherence and consistency, and therefore is an exact representative figure of all that truth in the human mind which is not reduced to practice, by being allowed to govern and control the love and the life, in which case, being deprived of the heavenly conjoining spirit of love to the Lord, and neighbourly love, it has nothing to give it consistence and coherence, consequently, nothing to give it strength and stability. As, therefore, a material house must soon fall, if it has no other foundation for its security than material sand, in like manner, a spiritual house must soon fall, if it has no



other security than spiritual sand; in other words, if it be built on mere speculative truths, or knowledges, which, being separated from heavenly life and love, are of consequence disjoined from each other, and therefore incapable of supplying a firm and durable foundation. It is accordingly said, that when *the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, it fell, and great was the fall of it*, to denote, that in time of spiritual trial or temptation, truth alone cannot stand; in other words, that the man of the church cannot be supported under spiritual conflicts, only so far as knowledge is formed into life, speculation brought into practice, and the whole man thus, both internal and external, restored to an eternal connection and conjunction of life with the divine fountain of all good and truth, whose high and holy name is Jesus Christ.

The fall is called a great fall, to distinguish it from lesser falls, and to teach the edifying and awful lesson, that the greatest fall to which the spiritual house of man is exposed, results not from ignorance, but from the knowledge of heavenly truth received in his understanding, when it is not suffered to operate and produce its proper fruits in the will and life, by purifying man from all his natural evils, and restoring him both internally and externally to the love and the practice of heavenly good. Jesus Christ therefore says, in another place, *If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!* (Matt. 6:23). to instruct us, that great darkness does not result from mere ignorance, or the want of spiritual light, but that it results from spiritual life itself, when it is either perverted, suffocated, or rejected, - in consequence of not applying it to the purposes for which it was given, namely, purification, reformation, and regeneration of the heart and life. The same truth is again inculcated in these words of Jesus Christ, *That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many blows. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of blows, shall be beaten with few blows* (Luke 12:47, 48)

From this parable then, we learn, in the first place, the distinguishing marks and characters of wisdom and folly, and what it is which properly constitutes the essence of each. For we are taught that the proper mark and character of wisdom, is both to hear and to do the sayings of Jesus Christ, whereas the proper mark and character of folly is, to hear only, and not to do. A man therefore cannot properly be called wise, merely because he has much knowledge, or because he abounds in the science even of things the most heavenly and sublime, but he becomes wise in proportion as he suffers such knowledge and science to elevate his love and affections, to raise him above his corruptions, and to conjoin him with the Father of his Being, the High and Holy God. Neither can he be properly called foolish on account of any defect in knowledge or science, but he becomes foolish by the possession of knowledge or science unpractised, in consequence of not suffering it to convert him from the love of evil to the love of good, and thus to influence his life and conversation. We are instructed yet further by the above parable, that in building our spiritual house, we ought both to hear and to do the words of Jesus Christ, and thus to lay the foundations on a rock; in other words, we ought to believe in the incarnate God, and to form our life in obedience to his heavenly precepts of love and charity, in which case our house can never fall, because it will ever be kept in connection with the Eternal, and under the support of his Omnipotence; whereas, if we only hear, and do not, we shall then build our house on the sand, and when trial or temptation assaults us, it will fall, and its fall will be the greater, because we knew our duty and did not practise it. Let us endeavour, therefore, from now on, to acquire the blessed character of true wisdom, and for this purpose, both to learn what our Heavenly Father requires of us, and also to practise it, that so, when the hour of trial and temptation comes, we may stand

steadfast and unmoved, and may enter into all the comfort of the blessed declaration, *It fell not, for it was founded on a rock.* Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## A PIECE OF NEW CLOTH ON AN OLD GARMENT, &c.

Matt. 9:16-18.

*No man puts a piece of new cloth upon an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*

Jesus Christ here speaks by correspondence, and thus represents spiritual things under natural images, agreeably to His usual mode of speaking.

The word new, is, in the original Greek, unwrought; and since cloth, according to its spiritual correspondence, signifies truth, inasmuch as it is applied to cover, defend, and keep warm the body, as truth is applied to cover, defend, and keep warm the spirit of man; therefore, by the un-worked cloth, here spoken of, is signified the truth of the Gospel, or the spiritual truth of the Christian church, as opposed to the old garment, or old truth, of the Jewish or representative church. Jesus Christ, therefore, here teaches, and warns his hearers of, the difficulty and the danger of imbibing the truths of the new Christian church, whilst the truths of the old or Jewish church, which were external and representative truths, were suffered to prevail, and to influence the persuasions and the conduct of their adherents. He says, therefore, that that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, because the truths of the new Christian church, which are internal spiritual truths, if mixed with those of the old representative church, rob them of their importance and influence, on which account, He adds, the rent is made worse, since there is no agreement between the precepts and commandments delivered by the Lord himself, and the statutes and judgements of the Jewish church, which were principally concerning sacrifices and representative worship.

By the new wine is again signified the truth of the new Christian church, in like manner as by the unwrought cloth above, but with this difference, that by new wine is signified a more internal order of truth, than by unwrought cloth, because wine is for inward nourishment, whereas cloth is for outward covering; still, however, the sense is the same, as denoting that the internal truths of the new Christian church, do not accord with the external truths of the Jewish church, which external truths are here called old bottles, of which it is said, that if new wine be put into them, the bottles burst, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish.

By the bottles bursting, if new wine be put into them, is denoted, that the truths of the Jewish church, which principally relate to sacrifices and representative worship, have no coherence with the truths of the Christian church; and by the wine running out, is further to be understood, that interior spiritual truth is dissipated, when representative truth is alone seen and acknowledged; and, lastly, by the bottles perishing, is denoted, that the external laws relating to sacrifices and ordinances are done away as soon as ever the things which they represent are fulfilled.

The new wine, as was shown above, is the internal spiritual truth of the Christian church, which was opened by the manifestation of God in the flesh, on which occasion all the representatives of the Jewish church were fulfilled and realised; and by putting this new

wine into new bottles is denoted, that this interior spiritual truth was to be taught, and admitted into human minds, by doctrines which were in agreement with it, and derived from it, thus by doctrines which would tend at once to promote its reception and perpetuity, on which account it is added, that both are preserved, namely both the truth and its doctrine, for doctrine is what contains and conveys truths, and is distinguished from truth as the bottle which contains wine is distinguished from the wine itself. When, therefore, doctrine is in agreement with truth, then both are preserved, because truth gives life and consistency to doctrine, whilst doctrine, in its turn, gives determination and support to truth.

The old garment and old bottles will apply, as apt figures, to the persuasions and sentiments of the old or natural man, in his unconverted state, before he begins to taste the new wine, and to put on the new garments of evangelical truth and righteousness. According to this application, the parable also teaches a lesson of important instruction and caution, by pointing out the extreme danger of mixing the principles of truth with those of error, or of imbibing heavenly knowledge, whilst the life and love of earthly science, and of vain imaginations, remains in its full force, unmortified and unsubdued. In this case, too, the divine declaration, that new wine must be put into new bottles, is full of wisdom and weighty obligation, enforcing on man the eternal law, that the persuasions dictated by the love of evil ought first to be combatted and removed, before the new wine of the everlasting Gospel is received, and that thus, new opinions, new persuasions, new principles, should be formed, capable of admitting and preserving the saving truth communicated from above.

The general instruction we gain from this parable may be thus summed up: we are taught by it, in the first place, that the truths of the Jewish church, which related principally to sacrifices and external ordinances, do not accord with the truths of the Christian church, which inculcate principally the law of love and charity, and thus the observance of internal worship, and that, consequently, the former are not to be mixed with the latter. We learn, in the second place, that the truths of the Christian church, being all of them from Heaven, are internal, spiritual, pure, and holy truths, and therefore require that the persuasions, sentiments, and ruling maxims of mankind should be in some sort of agreement with them, otherwise they will be dissipated, defiled, and destroyed. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, to form our whole minds and lives according to the wisdom contained in the above parable, and whilst we venerate the law of the Jewish rituals, as being a law of divine revelation, and the best accommodated to the temper of the Jewish people, for whose use it was given; we need not conceive ourselves bound to observe it according to its letter, now that we are favoured with the interior spiritual law of the Christian dispensation. Let us resolve further, now that we have begun to put on the new garment, and to drink the new wine of evangelical truth, to lay aside the old garment, and discard the old bottles of our former mere natural ideas, sentiments, and persuasions, so that no rent may be made in the new garment, and the new wine may not run out. Thus may we hope that the Eternal Wisdom will obtain a safe and undefiled reception in our hearts, and, connecting itself with persuasions which are in agreement with itself, will conduct us to all that security and happiness announced by the Great Redeemer, when He says. *They put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.* Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## CHILDREN SITTING IN THE MARKETS.

Matt. 11:16-17.

*But with what can I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*

According to the letter, the expression, this generation, means the people who lived at that time in Judea; but according to its spiritual sense, it means the state of the church among that people, in regard to their reception of the eternal truth, for such is the spiritual idea of generation, whenever the term occurs in the Word of God, inasmuch as that Holy Book treats only of spiritual generations, which are those of goodness and truth, and not of natural ones, which relate only to this world and the flesh.

This generation is said to be like children sitting in the markets, because, by children, or, as it is expressed in the original, infant boys, are not here to be understood children, or infant boys, but the things signified and represented by them, which things are nothing else but the truths of innocence, which were at that time revealed from Heaven to the Jewish people, in order to make them a church, or the people of God.

These children, or infant boys, are represented as sitting in the markets, because by the markets are figured natural minds, or the common states of the life of natural men, which are therefore called markets, because all the goods and truths contained in the Word of God are there presented for purchase, and every one, who is so disposed, may there become a purchaser, and thus acquire the eternal possession of those heavenly blessings. It is on this account that mention is again made of a market-place in the parable of the householder who hired labourers into his vineyard, where it is written, that he *saw others standing idle in the market-place*, for by standing idle in the market-place, is signified, that they neglected to cultivate the natural mind, by preparing it for the insemination and growth of the Eternal Truth. In the present, parable, however, it is not said that the children were standing idle in the markets, but that they were sitting there; because, by the term sitting, whenever it occurs in the Sacred Scriptures, is always expressed a state of the will, or love, as the term standing is uniformly applied to express a state of the understanding or thought.

It is further written of these children, or infant boys, that they were *calling to their fellows and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not lamented.*

The term here rendered fellows, is expressed in the original by a word which properly signifies companions; and companions, according to the spiritual idea, are all such as are associated with each other by knowledge and acquaintanceship, but not so much by love and friendship. When, therefore, the children are represented as calling to their fellows (or companions), it is to denote that they addressed themselves to the intellectual principle, in order to secure its attention to the truth of innocence, of which they were the

representative figures. It is therefore written, that they called and said; because, calling is an expression which relates to the will-principle, or love, as saying is an expression which relates more to the understanding, or truth, and therefore the two expressions are combined, with a view to point at that heavenly marriage of love and wisdom, or goodness and truth, which constitutes the very life and soul of the Revealed Word, and is accordingly marked, even in the letter in numberless instances.

The term piping, is expressive of the affection of good with which truth is taught, and which it is intended to excite. For such is the spiritual signification of all instruments of music, whenever they are mentioned in the Word of God, that they are all applied to denote affection, but with this difference, that the wind instruments are applied to denote the affection of good, and the stringed instruments to denote the affection of truth. Thus, when it is said, *Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and harp; praise Him with the timbrel and pipe; praise Him with stringed instruments and organs; praise Him upon the loud cymbals; praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals-*(Ps. 150:3, 4, 5) - it is to denote that the Lord is to be worshipped from every affection, both of good and of truth. The piping, therefore, above spoken of, has relation to the heavenly affection which influenced the truths, signified by the children; and when it is added, you have not danced, it is to denote further, that a reciprocal affection had not been excited in those to whom the truths were addressed. For dancing, according to its literal signification, is a motion of the body, corresponding with the musical sounds by which it is excited, and thus, according to its spiritual signification, it denotes an affection of the mind, corresponding with the affection by which truth is addressed to it, agreeably to which sense of the word it is written, *Let them praise his name in the dance,* (Ps. 149:3). to teach the instructive lesson, that man ought to glorify His Maker by receiving the truths of His Holy Word with a corresponding affection. To the same purpose it is written in another place, *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing,* (Psalm 30:11). denoting that heavenly truth was received with the heavenly affection which it is calculated to inspire. When, therefore, it is said, as in the present case, *You have not danced,* nothing else can be meant, according to the spiritual idea, but that the truths of Heaven had not excited a correspondent affection.

These words, *We have mourned to you, and you have not lamented,* are contrasted with the foregoing; and, therefore, as by piping was signified the heavenly affection with which truth was communicated from above, and as by not dancing was denoted that it had not been received with correspondent affection, so by mourning is signified truth communicated without affection, and by not lamenting is further denoted that the truth so communicated had not produced reciprocal and correspondent mourning.

Jesus Christ explains the nature and quality of this kind of truth in his illustration of this parable, where he says, *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he has a devil.* For John, as a teacher of truth, represented the Holy Word, but then he represented it as to a lower or more external order of truth than what was afterward taught by the Incarnate God; on which account he bears this witness concerning himself, *I indeed baptise you with water to repentance; but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire* (Matt. 3:11). For it deserves well to be noted, that the written Word of God contains truth of several orders and degrees, adapted to different minds, and to different states of the same mind, answering to the several instruments in husbandry, by which also those orders and degrees are expressed in the Sacred Records, such as the plough, the harrow,

the sickle, the threshing instrument, the fan; all of them useful in their several places, because all of them serviceable for the production of heavenly love and charity, and its incorporation in human minds. John the Baptist was a representative figure of one of these orders of truth, namely, the lowest, or most external, adapted to the state of natural minds, to convince them of sin, and lead them to repentance, but not fitted to communicate any heavenly good with interior truth; on which account it is said of John that *he came neither eating nor drinking*, to denote that by this order of truth, no interior good of heavenly love and charity, with its attendant truth, could be appropriated. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, opened a new order of interior truth, which, being more closely connected with heavenly love and charity, gained more interior admission into human minds, and communicated to them a measure of the heavenly Spirit in which it originated; on which account it is said of Him, that *He came eating and drinking*, to denote that both the good and its truth might be incorporated into the life of man.

It is written, that of John they say. *He has a devil*, and of Jesus Christ they say. *Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners*.

These words are another proof how difficult it is to adapt heavenly truth to the general reception of mankind, and how prone men are to frame excuses against admitting it, by vilifying both it and its teachers. Thus, in the present instance, the apparent severity of the truths taught by John the Baptist, is imputed to a diabolical agency, whilst the more consolatory and cheering doctrines delivered by the Great Saviour, are reprobated as allowing too many indulgences, and giving too much liberty to offenders against its sanctities. Nevertheless, the Divine remark which closes this parable, that *Wisdom is justified of her children*, must for ever remain true; because the children of wisdom are all those who are born of wisdom, not according to a figure of speech only, but in the greatest truth and reality, inasmuch as they are born of God, or of what the Apostle calls incorruptible seed, *by the word of God which lives and abides for ever* (1 Peter 1:23). These children, therefore, are taught by their Divine Parent to see that truth is of several orders and degrees, which may, in general, be distinguished into two, namely, truth of judgement, and truth of comfort, or, to express it otherwise, truth opposed to, and combating, evil, and truth cherishing and communicating good; the former being apparently harsh and severe, thus apparently separated from good, whilst the latter is soft and consolatory, and thus apparently nearer to good. Accordingly, as in the building of a house, there are variety of workmen, and an equal variety of tools or implements of workmanship employed; so in the building of that most grand and magnificent of all houses, the House of God, or His Church here on earth, a like variety of spiritual artificers are employed, and likewise of spiritual tools and implements of building, agreeably to what is written in the Prophet, *So the carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and him that smoothes with the hammer him that beat the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering. He fastened it with nails that it should not be moved* (Isaiah 41:7). The children of wisdom, therefore, justify their Divine Parent in this application of a variety of tools to effect her own blessed purposes, and especially in her adapting the two distinct dispensations of truth above referred to, namely, the piping and the mourning; the one figurative of the consolatory doctrine delivered by the Great Redeemer; and the other, of the apparently more severe and austere doctrine taught by His forerunner.

We are taught by this parable, that the Almighty applies a variety of instruments to effect His saving purposes, and that His Holy Word is accordingly stored with a variety of heavenly truths, suited to different persons, and to the same person at different times. We

learn, further, that this variety may be distinguished, in general, into two orders of truth; one of which is attended with the love and joy in which it originates, and which it is calculated to inspire; whilst the other appears harsh, austere, and, so far from promoting joy, is productive rather of sorrow and severe suffering. We are instructed yet further, that, in a corrupt state of the Church, both these orders of truth are unattended to and rendered ineffectual, but that by the children of wisdom they are seen to be alike profitable, because proceeding from the same divine mercy, and productive of the same divine effects. Let us resolve, therefore, to attend carefully to these two distinct orders of truth, and to keep our ears ever open to their heavenly sound, whether it be that of piping or of mourning, that so, in the one case, we may be found dancing, and in the other lamenting. Thus will each order of truth become a friend and benefactor, whilst by the piping we receive consolation and support, and by the mourning are led to a more vigorous repentance and sorrow for our sins: and thus, finally, may we hope to rank amongst those pure and heavenly beings, of whom it is written, *Wisdom is justified of her children.* Amen.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE SOWER.

Matt. 13:3-10.

*And he spate many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the birds came and devoured them up: some fell upon, stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no depth of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and, because they had no root, they withered away: and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: but others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

The Sower is the Son of Man, or Jesus Christ, in His Divine Humanity. He is called the Sower, because the seed sown is the Eternal Truth, or the Word of God, and all Truth, properly so called, is from Jesus Christ, who on that account calls Himself the Truth.

By sowing, when spoken of Jesus Christ, is to be understood the insemination and implantation of His Divine Truth, or Word, in the understandings and lives of men; this is effected by man's hearing, or reading, the Word of God, by his meditating on what he hears or reads, but, above all, by the application of what he hears, or reads, to the purpose of reforming his life, by separating from himself all evil ends and purposes, and by loving, thinking, and doing those good things which the Word of God teaches to be good.

Mankind, then, differ in the way of receiving and admitting the Eternal Truth, and this difference is described in the parable to be four-fold, which four-fold reception is distinguished in the parable, first by *some seed falling by the way-side*; secondly, by *some falling upon stony places, where they have not much earth*; thirdly, by *some falling among thorns*; and, lastly, by *some falling into good ground*.

The first distinction, described by *some seed falling by the way-side*, includes all those who receive the Word of God, or the Eternal Truth, without affection.

Every one receives the Word of God without affection who hears it, and reads it, and yet is not interested in what he hears and reads, having his affections immersed merely in the things of time and of sense, without any elevation to the great things of Eternity.

The second distinction, described by *the seeds which fell upon stony places, where they have not much earth*, includes all those who hear, or read, the Word of God, and imbibe its truth, yet not from a genuine affection for that truth, but from some external affection which regards only the gain and glory of this world: thus they love the truth, not for its own sake, but for the sake of their own temporal interests, which they think to advance and secure by means of the knowledge of truth.

The third distinction, described by *the seeds which fell among thorns*, includes all those who hear, or read, the Word of God, without any desire to remove the cravings of evil, and who thus are desirous to become intelligent in heavenly knowledge, but not for the purpose of purifying and reforming their own hearts and lives in the sight of God.

The last distinction, described by *the seeds which fell into good ground*, includes all those who receive the Word of God, and its Eternal Truths, with a genuine and devout affection,

at the same time applying them to the purposes for which they are given, namely, the purification, reformation, and regeneration of their hearts and lives in the sight of God.

Let us now consider the effects of these different receptions of the Word of God in the minds of men.

The first effect is described in these words. *The birds came and devoured them up.*

By the birds, in this passage, are to be understood all false persuasions of doctrine and of life, which always occupy the minds of those who are destitute of affection for the Eternal Truth; and by devouring up the seeds of truth is to be understood, that where the Word of God is received without affection it cannot produce its proper fruits, because it is liable to be perverted and destroyed by false persuasions, which occupy the natural mind of every man before he admits with affection the light of the Eternal Word.

The next effect of a wrong reception of the Word of God, is described in these words, *Forthwith they sprung up, because they had no depth of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

This is to denote, that where the Eternal Truth is received from an affection not genuine, that is to say, from an affection grounded in worldly gain or glory, in that mind an appearance is presented of the growth of truth, but then it is a growth in the memory and understanding only, and not in the will, or love; therefore, it is said, *because they have no depth of earth*, for the earth, in this case, relates to the will, or love, and its depth has relation to the inmost principle of each.

The sun, as applied in the Holy Scriptures, is used both in a good and bad sense, according to the subject treated of; and in a good sense, it relates to the Lord Himself, and to the Divine Love and Wisdom which proceed from Him; but in a bad sense, it is applied to denote the destructive principle of self-love, when it is exalted in the human mind above the love of God and Heaven. By the seeds being scorched, then, is to be understood, that where the truth is not received with a genuine affection, or for its own sake, in that mind it is withered and destroyed by the influence of self-love, which will not allow it to take its proper root, and bear its proper fruits; therefore, it is added, *because they had no root, they withered away*, to teach the important lesson, that where self-love is predominant it is impossible that the Eternal Truth should gain a place in the natural mind of man, so as to produce all its blessed and saving effects.

The third effect of a wrong reception of the Word of God, is described in these words. *The thorns sprung up and choked them.*

By the thorns are to be understood the cravings of evil, which Jesus Christ, in his explanation of the parable, calls the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, by which are meant, all those anxieties, concerns, and affections of the merely external man, who prevail over the better desires of the internal man; and by choking the seed of truth, is to be understood, all that suffocation of the pure knowledge of God, and of His Holy Word, which must of necessity take place in that mind, where the appetites of the body, and the cravings of animal life, are suffered to exalt themselves above the higher interests to man's spiritual and eternal life; therefore it is added, by Jesus Christ, that such a mind becomes unfruitful, because the fruitfulness of heavenly truth can only be found in its effects upon the natural man, by purifying his ends of life, and forming him to every good thought, word, and work; in case, therefore, that the operation of heavenly truth is resisted by the natural mind, it is impossible there can be any fruitfulness of truth in the natural

man.

The fourth effect resulting from the reception of the Eternal Truth is described in these words, *It brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.*

By fruit is to be understood, all the good of love and charity, that is to say, of love towards God, and charity towards our neighbour; and by bringing forth this fruit is to be understood, that this good of love and charity manifests itself in the natural man in all good thoughts, words, and works, of a holy and useful life, agreeably to those words of Jesus Christ, where He says, *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven:* (Matt. 5:16). and in another place, *If you know these things, happy are you if you do them* (John 13:17). It is, therefore, said in the parable, that other seed fell into good ground, to denote that the reception of truth, in this case, was an interior reception, or, a reception in the inner man; that is to say, in the will, or love, as well as in the understanding and memory. Therefore, Jesus Christ, in explaining this reception of the Eternal Truth, says, He that receives seed into good ground is he that hears the Word and understands it, to instruct us, that a right and profitable reception of the Eternal Truth is a reception both in the will, signified by hearing, and in the intellect, signified by understanding; and to instruct us yet further, that all fruitfulness of the Holy Word is the result of this two-fold reception, or what may be properly called the heavenly marriage of good and truth, and not from the single reception of either of those principles separate from the other.

The distinctions expressed in the parable by hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold, are intended to express the different degrees of fruitfulness of the Eternal Truth in human minds, which will ever depend upon the degree in which good and truth are united, or in which the will and understanding are conjointly affected. As, therefore, in some cases, this conjunction may be less perfect than in others, in like manner it is to be supposed, that the fruitfulness will vary, and this agreeably to the distinctions here mentioned of an hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold.

Jesus Christ concludes this parable by saying, *He that has ears to hear, let him hear;* teaching us by these words, that He intended his instruction only for those who were in a disposition to receive it, and not for those who were in no disposition. For by those who have ears to hear He meant to describe all sincere and upright minds, which are desirous, both' to receive and profit by the lessons of the Eternal Wisdom, therefore He says of these, let them hear, in other words, let them understand and receive, *because to them it is given, to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven,* inasmuch as they are in a right state of mind to profit, by those mysteries: whereas, to others it is not given, since others are not in a state to profit by them, and, therefore, if such mysteries were made known to them, they would but profane and defile them, and thus increase their condemnation, agreeably to those words of Jesus Christ, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil* (John 3:19).

The general instruction then to be derived from this parable is, that men ought to be very careful in hearing, or reading, the Word of God, to note the affection from which they hear and read, and to see that this affection be pure and genuine, resulting from the love of truth, for its own sake, and not for any earthly ends of temporal gain and glory. We learn, yet further, from this parable, that the Eternal Truth can never produce its full fruitfulness in the mind and life of man until it operates conjointly on his will and understanding, that is to say, on his love and thought; but that when it is attended with this double operation,

it forms in man the true heavenly marriage, by virtue whereof he has eternal conjunction with Jesus Christ and His kingdom, and through that conjunction is formed to every good thought, word, and work.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE WEEDS IN THE FIELD.

Matt. 13:24-31.

*Another Parable put he forth to them, saying. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the weeds also. So the servants of the householder came and said to him. Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field! From whence then has it weeds? He said to them. An enemy has done this. The servants said to him. Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said. Nay; lest, while you gather up the weeds, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together, until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together, first the weeds, and bind them in: bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is the government of the divine love and wisdom of Jesus Christ, and therefore, wherever this divine love and wisdom is allowed to have rule, whether it be in heaven or on earth, there is *the Kingdom of Heaven*.

It is likened to a man sowing good seed in his field, because it begins from a seed, which, like other seeds, increases and multiplies after its kind, and brings forth fruit, which also contains new seeds, and thus is capable of indefinite increase.

The seed is the Word of God, which is the Divine Truth of the Divine Love; and the Man that sows it is Jesus Christ, or God in his Divine Humanity, because all Divine Truth, which is of the Divine Love, proceeds from that Incarnate God, and is implanted by Him in the hearts of true believers. The seed is, therefore, called good seed, to denote that the Divine Truth, represented by the seed, is always in connection with the Divine Good of the Lord's mercy and love.

By the field is meant the Church here on earth, or the congregation of all good people who believe in Jesus Christ, and receive the seed of His Holy Word in sincere and devout hearts. This field is, therefore, called His field, because the Church is His, inasmuch as it is formed from those eternal principles of heavenly love and wisdom which proceed from Him, and which properly constitute Him.

By sleeping, according to a spiritual idea, is to be understood, the leading a natural life, separate from spiritual life, which life, in the Sacred Scriptures, is always called sleep, as spiritual life is always called a state of wakefulness.

By the enemy is meant the Devil, or the Spirits of Darkness, who are always present with man, watching and labouring to destroy the good seed of the kingdom.

The weeds denote all evil principles and false persuasions arising from selfish, worldly, and corporeal loves, which choke all the plants of heavenly growth, springing from the seed of the divine love and wisdom.

*By the enemy going his way*, is to be understood, his concealing himself, and appearing to be at a distance; for so it seems to the natural man, nor can he be persuaded to believe, until he becomes spiritual, that his spiritual foes, the Powers of Darkness, are always near

at hand, and ready to do him the greatest mischief.

It is said, that *when the blade sprung up and bare fruit, then appeared also the weeds.*

By the blade is meant the first appearance of truth in man's understanding, and by its springing up, is meant its growth in the understanding; for the seed of the Eternal Truth is first sown in man's memory, where it remains as a mere seed, until man begins to feel a concern about it, on account of his eternal salvation, in which case he is led to meditate on the great truths of God, which were deposited in his memory, and in consequence of such concern and meditation, those truths are exalted to an interior place in the mind, where it appears as a blade.

This blade bearing fruit denotes a still further reception and exaltation of the Eternal Truth, which takes place when truth begins to affect the will, or love; for spiritual fruit is love and charity, love towards God, and charity towards our neighbour; and this fruit never appears until man, from a deeper concern about his salvation, is led to form his life according to the truths which he has admitted into his understanding, and thus to obtain a new will, capable of loving God above all things, and his neighbour as himself.

The reason why the weeds should *then* appear, that is, when the blade sprang up and bare fruit, and not before, is, because the weeds, as was said, denote all evil principles and false persuasions of selfish, worldly, and corporeal loves, and these weeds do not show themselves until there is some growth of the heavenly principles of love and wisdom in the human mind, for error can never be seen but from truth, neither can evil be seen but from good, and therefore, until some degree of good and of truth is formed in the mind, errors and evils do not appear.

By the servants of the Householder are signified those who are principled in true knowledge of truth, because all such knowledge is called a servant, in the Sacred Scriptures, as administering to the higher principles of the good of love and charity, this being the great use and design of all knowledge; and by their coming and saying to the Householder, Lord did you not sow good seed, is signified their perplexity and concern at finding evil mixed with good, and error with truth, and their anxious inquiry concerning the cause. For nothing is more perplexing to the human mind than the origin of evil; and therefore instruction from heaven is solicited on this occasion, and in consequence of such solicitation, is imparted. For God never excites any inquiry in the regenerate mind, but with a view to gratify it, and he excites it for this purpose, that it maybe gratified.

Mention is now first made of a Householder, who was before called a Man.

Both the Man and the Householder relate to Jesus Christ, - who is called a Man from the principle of Divine Truth, during its insemination in the human mind. But when this truth begins to spring up, and bear the heavenly fruit of love and charity, He is then called a Householder, because a house, whenever it is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, has relation to love and charity, and since all love and charity are from Jesus Christ, and under his continual government and protection; therefore He is called a Householder.

The enemy is that principle in the human mind which opposes God, by not submitting its judgement and determination to the Divine Will and Wisdom; and on this account, the Devil is called the great enemy, because he is always opposing the will of the Most High. And here we may discover the true origin of all evil, and also of the evil one himself, called in the Sacred Scripture, the Devil, and Satan. This origin is not from God, because from God can come nothing but good, inasmuch as He is essential goodness; but it is from the determination of human minds, in the abuse of that freedom of will in which they are

created, and without which they could not be men. From the moment, therefore, that the human will inclines to call anything a good, separate from God, from that moment it creates evil, which, in itself, is nothing else but a good so separated.

We read that the servants said to him, *Will you then that we go and gather them together? But he said, Nay; lest, while you gather together the weeds, you root up the wheat together with them. Let both grow together to the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together the weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.* The reason of this delay on the part of the Householder, in separating the weeds from the wheat, or the evil from the good. He explains himself, when he says, *Lest, whilst you gather together the weeds, you root up the wheat together with them.*

The Householder teaches by these words, that it is dangerous to attempt the entire extirpation of things evil and false in the human mind, until the principles of goodness and truth from Heaven are fully formed. The Divine Law, therefore, on this occasion, is, that man should labour for the implantation and formation of those heavenly principles in himself, bearing patiently with the opposition arising from contrary principles; in which case those contrary principles will assist him, by their opposition, and the spiritual combats to which he will thus be exposed, in effecting a more perfect reception of heavenly principles, and their deeper entrenchment in his mind and life. When, therefore, the opposing principles have thus fulfilled their appointed purpose, they are separated, but not before.

The harvest denotes the full formation of goodness and truth in the regenerate mind, and in this case, the separation of those principles of life which are in opposition, and cause combat and disturbance.

By the reapers is to be understood the angelic heaven, inasmuch as the Lord, by and through the angelic heaven, effects such separation.

The weeds mean all evil and false principles of life; and to bind them in bundles, denotes that such principles are in arrangement one under another, and are thus connected one with another. The Divine wisdom, in effecting the separation of those principles, first discovers to us that such arrangement and connection exists, and that the general principle of what is evil and false in man consists of innumerable evil and false principles, which thus make a one, which one can never be separated until it is thus viewed minutely and distinctly as to the varieties of which it is composed.

The wheat, it has been already seen, signifies all heavenly principles of goodness and truth; and the being gathered into the barn, is signified being brought into heaven, because heaven is the grand receptacle of all those principles. The barn, therefore, is here called *my barn*, that is to say, the Lord's barn, because heaven is from the Lord, and in continual connection with Him; as are also all the principles of goodness and truth, which constitute heaven.

We learn from this parable, that man is placed here below between two kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, and that Jesus Christ, from his kingdom of light, is always endeavouring to inseminate in the human heart, the eternal principles of His own most pure love and wisdom, whilst the Spirits of Darkness, from their kingdom, are endeavouring to inseminate their own wicked principles of evil and of error. We learn, further, that the principles of evil and of error can never be discovered until the contrary principles of heavenly love and wisdom, or, what is the same thing, of heavenly goodness

and truth, begin to grow and produce their proper fruit. We are instructed, yet further, not only concerning the origin, but also concerning the separation and removal of evil and of error from the regenerate mind, being taught to expect that these effects cannot be produced suddenly, but in the divine order are of gradual operation. We are, therefore, lastly instructed, that we ought to run our Christian course in patient submission to the Divine Will, during the contest between good and evil, being well aware, that in such contest the opposition of evil is made to administer to the fuller implantation and fructification of good, and that, finally, through the Divine Mercy, the entire separation will be accomplished, when all of evil and of error will be put down into its own kingdom, and all of heavenly love and wisdom will be exalted to conjunction with Jesus Christ and the eternal happiness of His kingdom.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

Matt. 13:31, 32.

*Another parable put he forth to them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest amongst herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

We have already seen that by the Kingdom of Heaven is meant the government of the Divine Love and wisdom of Jesus Christ. This kingdom is here likened to *a grain of mustard-seed, which a man sowed in his field*, because the growth of the divine love and wisdom in man is from a small beginning, inasmuch as man, under the first reception of heavenly truth, is led to suppose that he can do good from himself, and not from the Lord, when yet such good is nothing but evil: but whereas, he is in a state of regeneration, there is something of good, but the least of all.

By this least of all seeds, when it is grown, being greater than herbs, and becoming a tree, is meant, that as faith is conjoining to love, the growth becomes greater, answering to that of the herb, until at length, when faith and love are fully conjoined, it acquires a full growth, answering to that of a tree.

By the birds of the air are to be understood things intellectual, or truths exalted into the higher or inner region of the understanding; and by the branches of the tree, the scientifics of those truths, or truth as it is received from the letter of the Word, when it first enters the memory, and is there deposited, as mere science of heavenly things; and by the birds making their nests in these branches, is denoted, that when faith and love are fully conjoined, then truths, or things intellectual, continually multiply and increase their kind in scientifics, which are of the memory.

We learn, generally, from this parable, that the Kingdom of Heaven, in man, who is the government of the Divine Love and Wisdom, is small at its beginning, because man, under the first reception of truth, supposes that he does good from himself. We are instructed further, not to be discouraged under these small beginnings, because, if we proceed patiently to acquire faith and love, there will be a gradual increase of heavenly good; until at length, when the conjunction is complete, the tree of righteousness will grow to its full size; in which case, things intellectual, which are heavenly truths exalted in the inner man, will be connected with the scientifics of truth in the outward man, and, by virtue of such connection, will multiply and increase immensely after their kind, until the human mind is restored to the order of heaven, through the reception of heavenly truth in all its degrees.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE LEAVEN.

Matt. 13:33.

*Another parable spoke he to them: The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three barrels of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

By the Kingdom of Heaven, as was observed in the former parable, is to be understood the government of the Divine Love and Wisdom. This government is like leaven, because by leaven is effected fermentation, and consequent purification of the bodies with which it is mixed.

Leaven, as being a fermenting substance, denotes all false principles of the understanding and life, and the three measures of meal denote all principles of heavenly truth in the regenerate mind. The comparison, therefore, here used by Jesus Christ, was intended to remind us of the combats which take place in such a mind, between false principles and true, with a view to the purification of the latter. For the effect of such combats is, to exalt in man the principles of heavenly love and charity above those of mere speculative truth and knowledge; and when man begins to act from the former principles, then the latter become purified, which they never can be so long as man acts from them alone, and not from the principles of heavenly love and charity.

By the woman is meant the Church, which is called woman, from the affection of truth, which makes the Church.

We learn from this parable, that the Kingdom of Heaven can never be opened and formed in man, until truth is purified from what is false, and that such purification cannot be effected without combat, by which is produced a kind of spiritual fermentation, in which case, good is conjoined with truth, and then all false principles are separated like dregs.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE TREASURE HID IN A FIELD.

Matt. 13:44.

*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hid in a field; which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.*

By the field is here meant the Church; and by the treasure hid in it is understood the Divine Truth in the Word of God, which lies concealed under the letter.

A man finds this treasure of the Divine Truth of God's word, when he is enlightened to see the distinction between the letter of the Word and the Spirit, and how the latter opens to him the Kingdom of Heaven, being in continual connection with Jesus Christ and His angelic kingdom.

He is said to hide the treasure of the Divine Truth when he stores it up in his interior mind, where it remains concealed from the observation of others, and even of himself, except when he is called to some particular notice of it; in which sense the Lord is said to feed him with the hidden manna (See: Rev. 2:17).

But it is said, that *for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.*

By the joy is meant the delight arising from the affection of truth; for all joy comes from some affection, and spiritual joy from the affection of good and truth.

His going away denotes that he applied himself to live and act in agreement with the Divine Truth which he had found; and by selling all that he has, is meant that he renounces his own self-love, which had before led him to regard his faculties and possessions as his own, independent of God, and that he now discovers that he possesses nothing properly his own, because all things are God's.

To buy, is an expression used in the Sacred Scripture, to denote the procuring of spiritual property; and, therefore, by buying that field, is meant the procuring to himself the spiritual treasure of the Divine Truth which was hid in it: and this is the case whenever man renounces self-love, and exalts the Divine Truth in his own heart and life, as the blessed source of all that can be good, and wise, and happy for him.

This parable teaches us that in the Word of God is stored up the eternal treasure of the Divine Truth, and that when a man is wise to discover this treasure, he stores it up in the interiors of his mind, and suffers it to guide and govern him in all his affections, thoughts, words, and works. We learn further, that through this treasure he is led to renounce his self-love, and to acknowledge all his faculties and possessions, not only to be the gifts of God, but also continually to be God's, and that by this acknowledgement he procures to himself all the blessing, protection, guidance, and government of the Eternal Truth, which is of Jesus Christ, and in continual connection with his Divine Life and Love.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MERCHANT-MAN SEEKING GOODLY PEARLS.

Matt. 13:45,46.

*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

A merchant-man, in the spiritual sense of the word, means one who procures to himself the knowledges of truth and of good, and thus attains intelligence and wisdom, agreeably to which idea, it is said, in the book of Proverbs, that *the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold* (Prov. 3:14).

By goodly pearls are meant the knowledges of truth, and by seeking those pearls is meant the affection of truth for its own sake, because nothing but such an affection can properly discover the truth. In the same sense, we are called to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, to teach us that we ought to be affected with the Kingdom of God and His righteousness above all other things.

By the one pearl of great price is meant the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and especially of the union of His Divine Nature with the human, and of the human reciprocally with the Divine, until He became, even as to His humanity, the only God of heaven and earth.

This pearl is called a pearl of great price, because the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the most precious and blessed of all other knowledges, being the essential life of all others, insomuch that without this knowledge, all other knowledges are comparatively as dead, having no connection with their living source.

Man is said to find this precious pearl of spiritual knowledge when, from the affection of truth, for its own sake, he seeks it in the Word of God, and discovers its brightness and value in his understanding: and he is said to find the knowledge of Jesus Christ when, from the same affection, he delights in the discovery from the Holy Word, that Jesus Christ is the Most High God, because in His Divine Person the Father and the Son, or the Divinity and Humanity are made eternally One, and constitute the Supreme and Sole Object of all Christian worship.

By the man's going is meant that he formed his life according to the knowledge of truth which he had discovered; and by his selling all that he had and buying it, is meant that he submitted all things of his natural life to be governed and guided by the Lord's life, that is to say, by His Divine Love and Wisdom.

We learn from this parable that every man ought to consider himself as a spiritual merchant-man, sent into the world to seek the goodly pearls of the Eternal Wisdom, which are the bright knowledges of heavenly truth, procured by devout affection from the Word of God. We learn, also, that in seeking these heavenly pearls, if he be sincere in his search, he is sure, sooner or later, to discover the one pearl of great price, which is the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And, lastly, we learn, that when he has found this pearl, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it; in other words, he renounces self-love, that he may submit all his affections, thoughts, words, and works, to the mild and gentle government of the Divine Love and Wisdom of Jesus Christ.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE NET CAST INTO THE SEA.

Matt. 13:47-50.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every Kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, cast out the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is here like a net cast into the sea; because by a net cast into the sea is figured and represented a gathering together of natural men to be instructed in the knowledge of the truth, and therefore the Apostles were called fishers of men, because they so collected and instructed them.

By this net bringing together of every kind is to be understood the collecting and instructing of all, both the good and the evil; for amongst natural men there is a difference, some being disposed to receive the Eternal Truth, and, by such reception, to become spiritual men, whilst others are disposed to reject the truth, and, by such rejection, to remain natural men.

The net is said to be full when full instruction has been received, or when all who are in the Church have imbibed the knowledges of truth.

By drawing it to the shore is meant a new state, when all who have received instruction are to be judged according to the use they have made of it in attaining, or not attaining, to the good of instruction, for the end of all instruction is, that man may attain the Eternal Good of Love and Charity.

Sitting, in the language of the Sacred Scriptures, is an expression used to denote a state of the will, or love, united with its proper wisdom; and since judgement is here treated of, or the separation of the evil from the good, therefore sitting down is here spoken of, because all such judgement is effected from the union of Love and Wisdom, or of Goodness and Truth.

By gathering the good into vessels, and casting the bad away, is to be understood the accomplishment of a work of judgement, or separation, when a fullness of instruction has been received; on which occasion, they who are principled in heavenly Good of Love and Charity, are gifted with all convenient truths and knowledges, by which the life is perfected to all eternity; whilst they who are principled in evil of selfish and worldly love, are deprived of all truth and knowledge, and left to perish in the fire of their own cravings.

From this parable we learn that all mankind, whether they be good, or evil, receive instruction from Heaven, in one degree or other, whereby they may be saved, and that such instruction is first received in a natural state. We learn further, that after instruction succeeds another state, which is that of exploration, or judgement, concerning the use which has been made of instruction. And, lastly, we learn, that they who have profited by instruction, so as to attain by it to a state of heavenly Love and Charity, are then gifted with new truths and knowledges in great abundance, for their further purification and regeneration; but that they who have not profited by instruction, by removing the evil of

selfish and worldly love, and attaining to heavenly Love and Charity, are, in the Day of judgement, deprived of all the knowledge of truth, and left to be consumed and tormented by their own evil lusts.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE INSTRUCTED SCRIBE.

Matt. 13:52.

*Therefore, every Scribe instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man that is an Householder, which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

A Scribe instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven is one who is initiated into the goods and truths of the Word of God, from which the Kingdom of Heaven is derived.

The Householder is the Lord Himself, because He is the sole proprietor of all things in the Grand House called Heaven and the Church.

Every one becomes like this Householder, in other words, every one becomes an image and likeness of God, that is to say, of Jesus Christ, by the reception of His Wisdom and Love, Wisdom being an image, and Love a likeness, and a likeness particularly in this respect, that man in such case wills and acts freely as from himself, as God wills and acts freely from himself; but yet under the full acknowledgement that the all, both of will and action, is from God.

The treasures of the Great Householder, Jesus Christ, are all the Divine Goods and Truths of His own Most Holy Word; and the things new and old, which He brings out of those treasures, are the interior and exterior Goods and Truths which He dispenses to mankind; the interior things of the Holy Word being called new, and the exterior things being called old, because the interior things are always filled with new life from their Living Fountain, whilst the exterior things, being more remote from that Life, are, comparatively, called old.

We learn from this parable, that in receiving into our minds and lives the Goods and Truths of God's Most Holy Word, we ought to imitate the Divine Giver of that Word, by not separating the letter from the spirit, nor the spirit from the letter; in other words, by not dividing between the internal and external sense of the Divine Law. Thus we learn, that we ought to cherish Goodness and Truth, in all their degrees, both internal and external, and to apply them to the regulation of our lives, since internal Good and Truth, without external, are imperfect and powerless, as external Good and Truth, without internal, want their life and fullness.



## **THE SUMMARY OF THE INTERNAL SENSE OF THE FOREGOING PARABLES, IN THEIR CONNEXION WITH EACH OTHER.**

When viewed in a connected series, these parables express and describe the whole process of regeneration, commencing with the first reception of Heavenly Truth from the Word, and advancing through all gradations of its growth to the full maturity of heavenly love and life.

The first parable of the Sower, describes the first insemination of Truth, which is the first step towards the regenerate life: the second parable of the Weeds of the Field, describes the manifestation of Evils and Falses in consequence of such insemination, which is a second step, and an effect of the first: the third parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed, describes the small increase of heavenly life, whilst man supposes that he does good from himself alone, and not from the Lord, which is a third state in the regeneration: the fourth parable of the Leaven, &c., describes the temptations consequent on the reception of heavenly truth and good, which is a fourth state: the fifth parable of Treasure Hid in a Field, describes the further effect of the reception of heavenly truth and good, in leading man to renounce his proprium, or his own proper life, that he may appropriate the life of heaven, signified by selling all that he has, and buying that field, which is a fifth state: the sixth parable, speaking of the Merchant-man seeking Goodly Pearls, describes the effect of heavenly truth in leading man to the acknowledgement of the Lord, as the alone source of all good and truth, and to the consequent renunciation of self-love and its guidance, which is a sixth state: the seventh parable of a Net cast into the Sea, describes the last effect of the reception of heavenly truth and good, in accomplishing a full and final separation between Goods and Evils, and between Truths and Falses, so that Goods and Truths are brought into conjunction with Heaven, whilst Evils and Falses are cast down into Hell, and this is the seventh and last state of the regenerate life.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## NOT THAT WHICH GOES INTO THE MOUTH DEFILES.

Matt. 15:10, 11.

*And He called the multitude, and said to them. Hear and understand: not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.*

Of the two expressions *called* and *said*, the first has relation to the divine love, the second to the divine wisdom; and, therefore, both expressions are used, in order to mark the heavenly marriage of love and wisdom, or of goodness and truth, which pervades every part of the Word of God, and from, and according to which, the Blessed Jesus on all occasions spoke.

Again, the term *hear* has more respect to the will, or love of man, as the term *understand* has more respect to the intellectual principle, or the understanding of man, and, therefore, the two terms, like *called* and *said*, are applied in reference to the heavenly marriage above spoken of, and to point out the necessity, on the part of man, of receiving and cherishing the Eternal Truth, both in his will and understanding, or with his affection and thought, before he can fully comprehend, and rightly profit by it.

By those things which enter into the mouth, in the sense of the letter, are meant foods of every kind, which, after use in the body, pass off through the stomach into the drain; but in the spiritual sense, by those things which enter into the mouth are signified all things, which, from the memory, and also from the world, enter into the thought; these things also correspond to food, and those which enter into the thought, and not at the same time into the will, do not render man unclean, for the memory, and hence the thought, are to man only as an entrance to him, inasmuch as the will is the man himself; those things which only enter into the thought, and no further, are rejected, as it were, through the belly into the drain; from which considerations it is evident, that by that which enters into the mouth, in the spiritual sense, is signified what enters into the thought from the memory and from the world; but by that which goes forth out of the mouth, in the spiritual sense, is signified thought derived from the will, or from the love; for by the heart, from which it goes forth from the mouth, and out of the mouth, is signified the will and love of man; and inasmuch as the love, or will, constitute the whole man, hence those things which go forth from the mouth, and out of the mouth, render man unclean.

In the Gospel according to St. Mark, where this same parable is recorded, we read, that what *enters into the belly, and goes out into the drain, purges all meats* (Mark 7:19).

The reason why the belly is said to purge all meats is, because by the belly is signified the thought of the understanding, as was said above; and by meats are signified all spiritual nourishments, and the thought of the understanding is what separates unclean things from clean, and thereby purges.

It is also added, *for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*, - by which we are to understand not only natural evils, but the spiritual evils which they signify; thus, by evil thoughts, or, as it might be better expressed, evil reasonings, are to be understood all oppositions in will and understanding to heavenly truth and good, whence come, first, murders, or the different

modes of destroying charity; secondly, adulteries, or the perversions of good; thirdly, fornications, or the perversions of truth; fourthly, thefts, or the persuasions that life is self-derived; fifthly, false witness, or the confounding of good with evil, and of what is true with what is false; sixthly, blasphemies, or denials of the Lord's Divinity, and, thus, of all Divine Influence.

By the words which follow, and which conclude this parable, *these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not the man*; Jesus Christ would teach, that man cannot desist from thinking evil, but from doing it; and that as soon as he receives evil from the thought into the will, in this case it does not go forth, but enters into him, and this is said to enter into the heart, and the things which thence go forth render him unclean, because what a man wills, this goes forth into speech and into act, so far as external restraints do not forbid; this, therefore, defiles, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile, because to eat with unwashed hands, according to the spiritual idea, is to receive and cherish heavenly good, before purification has been effected by means of heavenly truth.

In the relation of this parable, as it is given in the Gospel according to St. Mark, the evils enumerated, as proceeding from the heart, are not only more numerous, but also stand in a different order from those enumerated in the Gospel according to St. Matthew; for thus it is written, in the former Gospel, on the occasion, *for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*. Thus, in the Gospel according to St. Mark, thirteen different classes of evils are enumerated, and the evil of murder is reckoned after the evils of adultery and fornication; whereas, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, only seven classes of evils are enumerated, whilst the evil of murder precedes the evils of adultery and fornication.

Perhaps it is impossible for any finite intelligence to discover, and still more so to comprehend, all the depths of the divine wisdom involved in the difference here alluded to. Yet, if we are not allowed to see and apprehend the whole, it may still be granted us to investigate a part of the hidden treasures, at least, to form some conjecture concerning their nature and their value. May we not, therefore, without presumption, suggest the following query, namely: Whether the two distinct classes of evils, as above enumerated by the two Evangelists, may not be referred to the two grand, but distinct, fountains of all evil, namely, self-love, and the love of the world? Certain it is, that all evils originate in those two polluted fountains; and it is equally certain that, according to their origin, they take rank in a different order, which may account for the difference, in this respect, in the Evangelical history. It is remarkable, too, that in the relation of the parable given by both Evangelists, evil thoughts, or, more properly, evil reasonings, are placed at the head of the catalogue; by which is plainly implied, that all evils have their birth from perverse love in the will, confirmed by perverse thought in the understanding. But the term evil, here annexed to thought, is differently expressed in the original Greek of the two Evangelists; for, in St. Matthew, it is expressed by the adjective *poneroi*, and, in St. Mark, by the adjective *kacoi*, which is a further proof that the perverse love in the will is of a different quality, and from a different source in the two cases. But, whatever uncertainty there may be in the above conjecture, there can be no doubt of this, that all evils originate in perverse love, confirmed by perverse thought; and that whether this perverse love be the love of self, or the love of the world, the progeny derived from its conjunction with its favourite false reasonings and persuasions is both numerous and frightful, closing either

in blasphemy or in foolishness, thus, either in the total denial of all divine influence, or in a total blindness, as to all the certainties and consolations of the divine wisdom.

We learn, then, from this parable, that there is a correspondence, or agreement, between the body and the spirit of man, and all the parts and principles of each, for in speaking of the thought and understanding of man, Jesus Christ expresses it by the mouth; and, again, in speaking of the will, or love, of man. He expresses it by the heart, which is a manifest proof that there is an agreement, or correspondence, between those bodily organs and those mental principles; so that what is true of the former, in regard to the body, is true of the latter, in regard to the spirit. We learn, further, that the evil which enters into man's thought, and is there rejected, so as not to be allowed admission into the will, or love, does not defile him, and that it only acquires the faculty of defiling- when it is cherished in his will, or love, and is suffered to proceed thence into act or operation. We learn, lastly, that there are several distinct genera, or species, of spiritual evil, which have all of them their origin from a perverse will and a perverse understanding, and which may be reduced to two distinct classes, namely, those which are derived from the love of self, and those which are derived from the love of the world, when those loves become predominant loves.

Let us resolve, therefore, to profit by all this divine instruction, and, for this purpose, to beg of Jesus Christ the illumination of His Holy Spirit, to enable us to discern, not only that the body of man is in perpetual connection with his spirit, and derives from it all its life, but likewise that all the parts of In's body are exact representative figures of the several principles in his spirit from which they proceed, and which they are intended to express. Let us resolve, further, to supplicate His divine grace, to enable us to discern the true and only source of all human defilement, until we discover clearly that this source is not in the thought or understanding, but in the will, or love; and to enable us farther to take heed, lest at any time we be found cherishing evil in this latter principle of mind and life, since in such case it must of necessity burst forth into manifestation, and cause defilement. Lastly, let us resolve to refer all evils to their two grand fountains, self-love, and the love of the world, and, especially to guard against the thoughts, or reasonings, derived from those two corrupt sources, when they become predominant; since from such thoughts, or reasonings, all evils are generated, which either defile or destroy mankind. Thus may we humbly hope, that the mind, or spirit, with which we have been gifted, instead of becoming the filthy den of the unclean affections of murder, of adultery, of fornication, of theft, of false witness, and of blasphemy, will become the clean and consecrated abode of charity, of purity, both in will and thought; of justice, of truth, and of devout acknowledgement that Jesus Christ, in His Divine Humanity, is the Father and Fountain of all life, love, peace, and benediction. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE KING THAT WOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF HIS SERVANTS.

Matt. 18:23-35.

*Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven like a certain King, who would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought to him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But for as much as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him and forgave him the debt. But the same: servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that you owe. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay you all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told to their Lord all that was done. Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said to him, O you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you pleaded with me: should not you also have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on you? And his Lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also to you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

By the King is here meant Jesus Christ, as to His Divine Wisdom, or Truth, and by taking account of his servants is to be understood, the exercise of judgement from that Divine Wisdom, or Truth, so as to discover the qualities of each.

The ten thousand talents denote the immense debt which every man owes to his Creator for all the mercies of creation, preservation, redemption, and regeneration, which he has received at his hands.

No one is able of himself to pay this immense debt, nor even to take account of it, because of its immensity, therefore it is said *he had not to pay*.

By *his Lord commanding him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made*, is meant, that the man was brought into trial and exercise in his own mind, from a consciousness that, unless he paid the debt which was owing, he could not escape condemnation.

The first effect produced by this trial and exercise on the part of man, was humiliation, signified by the man falling down: the second effect was acknowledgement of the Lord, His Divine Love, Wisdom, and Providence, signified by worshipping him: the third effect was intercession for a such a measure of patient endurance, as might enable him finally to discharge the debt by a full acknowledgement of the mercies he had received.

By the Lord being moved with compassion, is meant the tenderness of the Divine Love towards His penitent children, when brought into judgement concerning trespasses, and especially concerning that immense debt which they owe to the Divine Being.

By loosing him, is to be understood that his Affections were set at liberty to pursue an eternal object, in consequence of the spiritual trial and exercise through which he had passed. For such is the nature and effect of spiritual trial, that by it the powers of evil, to which the mind had been before subjected as a miserable slave, are disturbed and removed, in which case the soul regains its proper liberty, and being loosed from the bands of worldly and selfish attachments, regains its native freedom, to choose and pursue the eternal good for which it was created in the kingdom and favour of its Great Creator.

The debt which every man owes to God is forgiven, or remitted, whenever man is brought into true humiliation of heart and life, because, in such case, he is disposed gratefully to acknowledge that all his faculties, both of body and mind, are from God, and are God's; consequently, that all his happiness, and even all his temporal property, are from the same Divine Source.

It is said of the *servant that he went forth and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him an hundred pence, and that he took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that you owe; and that his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay you all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, until he should pay the debt.* From this part of the parable we learn that, notwithstanding the operation of the Divine Love and Mercy in the inner man, the outward man was not yet reduced to obedience, so as to comply with that operation by correspondent acts of kindness and charity; in other words, the external man was not yet brought into entire submission to the law of the divine life and spirit in the internal man, as it ought to have been.

By *fellow-servants* are meant the dictates of heavenly truth, in the external man; and by their seeing what was done, is to be understood, that all things in the external man are under the view, or instruction, of the Divine Truth; and by their being exceedingly sorry is meant, the contrariety subsisting between the dictates of heavenly truth, and the unpurified affections of the natural mind before it is regenerated; and by their telling to their Lord the things which were done is meant, the influx and communication of the Divine Truth itself with those dictates.

By the Lord *calling him* is to be understood, the Divine Truth itself, which has its abode in the inmost principles of every human mind; and by what the Lord says to the servant, on this occasion, is to be understood, the influx of that truth into lower principles, reproving them for not attending to the operations of the Divine Mercy respecting them, and teaching that it is the intention of this mercy to produce its saving and blessed effects in the external, or natural, man, as they are manifested in the internal, or spiritual, man, that so the whole man may become a living operative form of that mercy.

By the Lord being *angry* is to be understood, the contrariety subsisting between the Divine Truth and the natural propensity of the unregenerate man; and by delivering him to the tormentors is meant, the pain experienced on the occasion in the consciences of those who are about to be regenerated.

It is said, *until he should pay all that was due to him*, from which words we learn, that the pain of trial and temptation is continued until a total surrender is made of the human will to the Divine, attended with the grateful acknowledgement, that all of saving Mercy, Love, Wisdom, Peace, and Protection are from God, and nothing at all from man's self; and, further, that man ought to extend in himself the operation of those Divine Virtues and Graces, by being kind, compassionate, and merciful to others, as God is to him.

The general instruction which we learn from this parable, is, that every man, from Creation, and also from Redemption, owes an immense debt to his Great Creator, and that the only method by which he can discharge this debt, is to forgive the debts of his fellow-creatures; in other words, to cherish towards them the spirit of heavenly Charity, by which he will be taught that, instead of their being indebted to him, as he must of necessity suppose in his natural and unconverted state, the truth is, that he is indebted to them, and that there is no human being to whom he does not owe obligation, more or less. We learn, further, from this parable, that it is the great intention of God to bring the internal and external man into agreement and conjunction, that so the Divine Love and Wisdom, in the internal man, may operate freely, and produce their proper fruits in the external man; but that this intention of the Divine Mercy cannot be accomplished without trials and temptations, by which the natural opposition of the external man to the Divine Rule may be overcome, and the whole man may finally be reduced to a state of total submission.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE HOUSEHOLDER WHO HIRED LABOURERS INTO HIS VINEYARD.

Matt. 20:1-16.

*For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man that is an Householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said to them; Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and says to them. Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him. Because no man has hired us. He says to them. Go you also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall you receive. So when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard says to his steward. Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last to the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the owner of the house, saying. These last have worked but one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny? Take what is yours, and go your way: I will give to this last, even as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own! Is your eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

The Householder signifies Jesus Christ, as to his human and divine nature, who is so called, as being the Source and Preserver of all Goods and Truths, which make Heaven and the Church.

Early in the morning denotes the first state of the Church, when the light of the Divine Truth, which makes the Church, first begins to be manifested; and by going out early in the morning is signified, the first dawn of the influx of the Divine Good and Truth into the men of the Church.

By the vineyard is meant the Church, which is called a vineyard, from its being planted with vines, or heavenly truths, derived from Jesus Christ, who is the True Vine; and by the labourers in this vineyard are to be understood, all those who cherish in heart and life the above Goods and Truths of the Word of God, preserving them from all those natural evils and false persuasions which have a tendency to destroy them; and by hiring these labourers is to be understood, the blessed recompense of heavenly and eternal life, proposed to all such faithful labourers.

It is said, that when the Householder *had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

By a penny a day is to be understood, the recompense given and procured under every particular state of the reception and growth of heavenly truth; and by agreeing with the



labourers for this penny is to be further understood, conjunction of life with Jesus Christ, which is the result of that reception and growth.

Sending, when applied to the Divine Being, denotes the putting forth, or emanation, of His own Divine Power; and, therefore, by sending the labourers into his vineyard is to be understood, the communicating to them Divine Power from Himself, by which they might be enabled 'to cherish, in their own hearts and lives, the heavenly goods and truths of His Most Holy Word.

By the Householder going out is to be understood, the Divine Influx into the men of the Church; and by his going out about the third hour, is to be understood, a successive state of natural life with the men of the Church.

The market-place signifies a state of the natural life in which man is capable of procuring to himself the Goods and Truths of Heaven and the Church; and by the Householder seeing others standing idle in it is to be understood, the Divine inspection exercised on those who were not yet converted from a natural state of life to a spiritual state, having never done the work of repentance from a sincere desire to attain regeneration through conjunction with the Divine Love and Wisdom. All such are said to be idle, because they have never applied themselves to that one thing needful, which is the great work for which they were sent into the world.

But the Householder *said to them, Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is just, I will give you.*

By saying to them is meant, a Divine dictate in their hearts and consciences; and by go also into the vineyard is meant, the object of that dictate, in instructing them that it is the Divine Will, grounded in the Divine Love and Mercy, that no human being should stand idle, but that every one should endeavour to cultivate, in his own heart and life, those heavenly graces and virtues which the Father of Mercies is desirous to implant in the minds of all his children, for their eternal happiness and salvation.

By the words, whatsoever is just I will give you, the Householder would instruct the idle, that they have a just God to deal with, who rewards every one according to his works; in other words, who imparts the grace of His own Love and Wisdom to every one, in proportion to his desire of it.

The sixth and ninth hour signify successive states of the natural life before man becomes spiritual; and by doing likewise is meant the same thing as hiring labourers into his vineyard; that is to say, the recompense of eternal life, proposed to all those of the Church, who are faithful and diligent in cultivating the graces of the Divine Love and Wisdom.

We now come to the eleventh hour, which is mentioned in the succeeding verse. Jesus Christ distinguishes the period of human life into twelve hours, when he says, *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* By the eleventh hour, therefore, is to be understood, the last period of natural life preceding its completion; in other words, preceding the period of final decision, either for eternal happiness or misery.

The Householder now first proposes the question, *Why stand you here all the day idle?* to the intent that he might lead those to whom it was addressed, to make the profitable inquiry in themselves concerning the causes which withhold them from cultivating the graces, and bringing forth the fruits of the Divine Love and Wisdom in their own minds and lives. For such is the design of all inquiry proceeding from the Most High. It is not

made for his own sake, or for his own information, but for the sake and for the information of others, by suggesting to them the spirit of inquisition which may conduct them to a right knowledge of God and of themselves, by leading them to explore their own secret intentions and purposes, and thus to discover the interior operations of their own minds.

From the answer, *Because no man has hired us*, we learn, that the true reason why mankind, in general, live carelessly, and with indifference to their eternal concerns, is, because they have never been brought to reflect, in their own minds, on the inconceivable happiness reserved in heaven for all those who have cherished in their hearts and lives the graces of heaven; that is to say, the graces and virtues resulting from a right reception of the Divine Love and Wisdom.

It is said, that *when evening was come, the Lord of the vineyard said to his steward. Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last to the first*. By the evening is meant in this passage, the termination, or final period, of man's natural life, when he enters upon the great realities of another world, and becomes associated with spiritual beings in that world, agreeing with the interior state of his own mind, whether it be good or evil.

The Lord of the vineyard properly denotes the Divine Good of the Divine Love; and His steward, therefore, denotes the Divine Truth of His Wisdom; hence, as a steward administers to his Lord, so the Divine Truth administers to the Divine Good. Moreover, all man's spiritual recompense is dispensed from the Divine Good by, or through, the Divine Truth; and, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard here says to his steward: Call the labourers, and give them their hire; because the hire of the labourers denotes their spiritual recompense, and all spiritual recompense is from the Divine Good, in conjunction with the Divine Truth.

It is said, *beginning from the last to the first*, because the subject relates to recompense, and all recompense has reference to joy, delight, and happiness; and this recompense commences, first, in the natural principle, which is the last, or lowest, and then advances to the higher, or first principles of the human mind, called spiritual and celestial; nor is it full till it is communicated conjointly to all the principles.

By a penny, it has been already shown, is meant the recompense given and procured under every particular state of the reception and growth of heavenly truth; and, therefore, by receiving each a penny, is to be understood, that each received a recompense of heavenly joy and delight, proportioned to the reception and growth of heavenly truth in his own mind and life.

By the first supposing that they should receive more than a penny, it was intended to point out what is the general mistake and misapprehension of mankind in regard to future recompense. For it is commonly supposed, that what is called the recompense of the righteous will be dealt out hereafter, either according to the arbitrary mercy of the Almighty, or in the way of payment for particular acts of service done by his creatures, just as a master here on earth pays his servant wages for the work which he has performed. Whereas, the real truth is, that every one is rewarded hereafter, according to his reception of heavenly life; and since all heavenly life is of love and charity, therefore, every one is rewarded hereafter according to the state of his mind, in regard to those two heavenly principles, namely, Love to the Lord, and Charity towards his neighbour. It is, moreover, to be observed, that all heavenly joy and delight spring from, and are connected

with, those two heavenly loves, and, therefore, it is impossible for any one to attain heavenly joy and delight, which is the pure recompense of the righteous, only so far as, by the cultivation of heavenly truth in his mind, and its fructification in his life, he is rendered receptive of the full influence and operation of the above two heavenly loves. These first, therefore, likewise received every one a penny; in other words, they received happiness according to the state of their love and affection.

But it is said, that *when they had received it, they murmured against the Householder, saying, These last have worked one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and heat of the day.*

This murmuring denotes, that they had not worked in the vineyard from a right principle, but rather to establish their own merits; in other words, they had done good with a view to recompense, and not from the love and affection of doing good; and they had imbibed truth for selfish or worldly ends, and not from the genuine affection of truth for its own sake. And, where this is the case, it is always attended with a desire of pre-eminence and distinction, even in spiritual things; whereas, the love of goodness for the sake of goodness, and of truth for the sake of truth, is always accompanied with that spirit of self-humiliation and charity towards others which takes delight in seeing others exalted even to the highest state of happiness, whilst it is content itself to take the lowest place. And the reason is, because true love and charity find all their happiness in seeing others happy, and in serving them to promote their happiness.

The burden and heat of the day are expressions to denote spiritual labour, or the difficulties which man has to surmount in the work of regeneration. Two distinct expressions, therefore, are made use of, to denote the two distinct sources of such difficulty, namely, error in the human understanding, and evil in the will, the former being called a burden, and the latter heat. To bear the burden and heat of the day, then, is to endure patiently the opposition arising from the natural false persuasions in the understanding, and the natural cravings or perverse desires in the will. The day, according to its spiritual meaning, denotes every successive state in the regenerate life.

*But the Householder answering, said to one of them, Friend, I do you no wrong: did you not agree with me for a penny?*

In the original language of the New Testament, the labourer is not here called friend, but companion; and this latter term is very well adapted to express the relationship subsisting between him and the Householder, which the term friend does not express. For a companion is one with whom we have acquaintance indeed, but this not of any very intimate sort, such as marks the connection of friendship. In the language of God, therefore, every man is called His companion who has gained any acquaintance with Him, through the knowledge of His Word and Kingdom; but he is never called a friend, until he obeys that knowledge, so as to find a delight in obedience, and in the application of what he knows to the purification and reformation of his life.

The Householder says to the labourer, I do you no wrong, by which he meant to instruct him, and, through him, all the generations of men, that His ways, as being the God of the universe, are ways of justice and of judgement, and that He deals with all His children, and cannot but deal with them, according, to the most exact measure of what is right and equitable resulting from those divine principles. He meant, therefore, to teach further, that none of his children have any reason to complain of the dispensations of the Divine Providence towards them, because the wrong, or injustice, is always on their part, and not

on God's, from whom nothing can proceed but what is grounded in the purest love and mercy, directed by an infinite and unerring wisdom.

The Householder further says to the labourer, *Did you not agree with me for a penny?* thus instructing him, that he had no reason to complain of injustice, when he had received the recompense which had been previously agreed upon; and, through him, instructing all labourers in the spiritual vineyard, that they always receive reward in proportion to their labour; in other words, that the good of heavenly love is always communicated to them in proportion to the earnest desire with which they seek it, and the sacrifices which they make of their self-love in order to attain it.

In the next verse the original has it. *Take your own, and go;* by which is meant, that man ought to be content with that measure of the divine grace and mercy which is imparted to him by his Heavenly Father, because in all such grace and mercy, to whomsoever it is given, there is contained an infinity of blessing, and, therefore, he has no occasion either to be discontented at his own lot, or to envy another's, because it is impossible that he himself should receive more than an infinite good, and it is alike impossible that any one else should receive more, consequently, every receiver has reason to be fully contented with the promised recompense.

Again, *I will give to this last even as to you,* is expressed in the original, *I am willing to give to this last, even as to you;* and, therefore, the Householder meant to instruct the labourer, and, through him, all other spiritual labourers, that God is ever willing, out of His adorable and inexhaustible mercy, to communicate Himself, and all that He has, to the least and lowest of His creatures, and that the only limit set to such communication, is the capacity of his creatures to receive. He meant, therefore, to improve that capacity, by exciting in his creatures such a devout sense of His fatherly tenderness and loving-kindness, as may dispose them to exert all possible earnestness in rendering themselves suitable to receive and to co-operate with His Divine Love and Wisdom.

The Householder then proposes these two significant questions to this murmuring labourer:- *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is your eye evil, because I am good?* The purport of the first question cannot be understood, until a correction be made in its expression; for, in the original tongue, it is not said *with* mine own, but *in* mine own, and according to this mode of expression the sense is plain and obvious, teaching that the Almighty has all power in His own kingdom, and in his own people, to mould and form them after His own image and likeness, but with an endless variety, according to the several capacities and degrees of reception in each. It was intended, therefore, to teach further, that man's highest duty consists in preparing himself to be a humble and thankful receiver of the Divine Mercy and Truth, because, in such case, he admits into his mind a measure of the Divine Omnipotence, to which he attaches himself, and in connection with which he finds the Scripture fulfilled, which says, *All things are possible to him that believes.*

The question, *Is your eye evil because I am good?* involves in it two points of the greatest moment, to be well considered by every intelligent mind. The first point is, that God is the purest goodness, and, consequently, that from him no evil can come of any sort or degree. The second point is, an inquiry concerning the origin of evil, and particularly concerning the origin of a perverse understanding, or judgement, signified here by an evil eye. The Almighty, therefore, by this significant question, intended to lead all his children to explore in themselves, so as clearly to discover, the origin of all that corruption of the will, or heart, and that perverseness of the understanding and thoughts, which are so

manifestly at variance with His Divine Love and Wisdom. He meant thus to lead them to see that all evil originates in a perversion of good, and, therefore, is nothing else but a good separated from its divine source, by being supposed to belong to man as his own, and not to be derived continually from God.

The parable concludes with these words. *So the first shall be last, and the last first, for many are called, but few chosen*, by which is meant, that they who have cherished humble and lowly sentiments of themselves, shall be exalted in the divine favour and mercy; in other words, they shall become receptive of that favour and mercy in a degree proportioned to their humiliation. On the contrary, they who have cherished high ideas of their own merits, and have thought to gain the highest place in Heaven, in the way of recompense for their good works, will be last and lowest in the divine estimation, and that because by their high opinion of their own merits they have separated themselves from a right reception and acknowledgement of the divine mercy and favour, and have thus been led to impute salvation to themselves, more than to God.

The called, are they who receive the knowledge of God in their understandings; and since this is the case with the generality of those who possess the Sacred Scriptures, or Word of God, therefore they are said to be many: but the chosen, are they who receive the love of God in their wills, together with the truth of God in their understandings, for these are they whom God always chooses, as being in most agreement with the purities of His own love and mercy: and since this love of God is a plant of rarer growth than the knowledge of God, therefore, these are said to be comparatively few.

We learn generally from this parable, that the Almighty in His infinite mercy, is at all times desirous to communicate to man His own eternal truth, for the purpose of reformation and regeneration, and that with this view He invites man to co-operate both with his will, his understanding, and his works, that so all those principles of his life may be formed according to the truth, and rendered productive of its heavenly fruits of love and charity. We are instructed further, that different persons are called, at different periods of life, to this great work, and that some, therefore, enter upon it at an earlier period, and some at a later, but that the recompense promised to all is the same, namely, that every one shall be gifted with heavenly love and wisdom in proportion to his desire of those heavenly graces, and in proportion also to the sincerity with which he labours to remove all opposite principles from his heart and life, and to bring all his natural affections, thoughts, and delights, into subjection to the spiritual ones in which they originate. We are, further, instructed to guard against all that selfishness of our spirit, which would incline us either to seek to establish our own merits, and thus to be greater in the Kingdom of Heaven than others, or to seek to depreciate the merits of others, and thus to love to see them below ourselves. And, lastly, we learn that we ought thus to abase ourselves, and to exalt others, from a feeling sense and apprehension of that divine inexhaustible mercy, which is always willing to make others happy out of itself, and which thus finds its own greatest bliss in imparting bliss to others. Thus may we humbly hope to become the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, whilst we are seeking to be the least, and not to be found amongst the called only, but amongst the chosen also, whilst we labour to bring our whole will, understanding, and operation, into an entire conformity and submission to the Divine Will, Wisdom, and Operation of Jesus Christ.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## A CERTAIN MAN WHO HAD TWO SONS.

Matt. 21:28-32.

*A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of those two did the will of his father? They say to him, The first. Jesus says to them, Verily I say to you, that the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not: but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him.*

In the original, it is said, a man had two sons, the word certain being added by the translators; and by the term man is here meant, the Lord in His Divine Humanity, who is, properly, the Only Man, whilst all other men are men by derivation from Him, or in consequence of the life which He continually imparts. By the two sons, therefore, of this man, are figured and represented two distinct classes of people, comprehending the whole human race; one of which classes, as it afterwards appears, is principled in an obedient will, but not so much in an enlightened understanding, whilst the other is in possession of an enlightened understanding, but is deficient in the point of obedience, or of a submissive will.

It is written of the above man and his two sons, that *He came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard.*

Two distinct expressions are here employed to denote the two distinct principles of the divine love and the divine wisdom; the former of which is involved in the term came, whilst the latter is involved in the term said. Thus the two terms combined denote the marriage-union of those two divine principles, and inculcate, further, the edifying lesson, that before the Almighty can address man to advantage with His divine wisdom, He must first come, and move man's affections by the presence of His divine love; in other words, man must begin to regard an eternal end, before he can be qualified to understand the eternal truth.

By the vineyard is spiritually understood the Lord's Church here on earth, agreeably to what is written in the Prophet, *The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel* (Isaiah 5:7). And the Church is a vineyard in consequence of cherishing the principles of heavenly truth from Jesus Christ, who, as being the divine fountain of truth, calls Himself the true vine (John xv). To go, then, and work in this vineyard, is the important duty binding on all the children of men, as implying a life in conformity to the truth, signified by the term go, and also co-operation with Jesus Christ in opposing those affections, appetites, and passions, which are contrary to the truth, signified by the term work. It is said today, because by today, according to the spiritual idea, is meant, to eternity, and, therefore, the expression is used in order to instruct mankind, that they ought for ever to cherish in their minds the principles of heavenly life, by combating all contrary principles, and thus rendering themselves receptive, to all eternity, of the divine love and the divine wisdom.

The reply and consequent conduct of the first son involve in them two distinct considerations; first, that the understanding of this son was not in agreement with his father's requirement, which disagreement is marked by his saying, I will not; for saying has reference to the thought or understanding-: and, secondly, that the will of this son was not opposed to the father's command, on which account it is said, that afterwards he repented and went. By this son, therefore, as was above hinted, are represented and described all those of the human race, who externally, or in thought, oppose divine counsels, but who yet inwardly, or in affection, do not oppose; thus by this son are represented and described specifically the Gentiles, who are not in possession of the Word of revelation, and who, consequently, cherish thoughts, ideas, and persuasions, which are not in agreement with that Word, but who, yet, notwithstanding this disagreement in their intellect, are still, by reason of their simplicity and sincerity, disposed to admit the Eternal Truth for the rule and government of their lives.

The reply and consequent conduct of the second son involve in them the true state of his mind, which was such, as to enable him to discern clearly what his duty was, and how he ought to comply with his father's will, whilst, at the same time, his own will was inclined to act contrary to his father's, and also to oppose his own sense of duty and obligation. Thus, this second son is a representative figure of all those of the human race, whose understandings are enlightened to see what line of conduct is good and right for them to pursue, but whose inclinations lead them in a contrary direction, in consequence of being opposed to all the dictates of truth and equity. He is more specifically a representative figure of the Jewish nation, who, being in possession of the eternal truth, as made known in the Word of revelation, and having their understandings thus enlightened with the knowledge of God, and of His Holy Laws, were yet disinclined, in will, to conform to that knowledge, and to obey those laws. As, therefore, the first son specifically represented the Gentiles, so the second son specifically represented the Jews.

In the question, *Whether of those two did the will of his father?* the Blessed Jesus makes an appeal to the common sense- and reason of mankind, under the full assurance, that the answer would be such as is here recorded, where it is written, They say to Him, the first. Thus the Blessed Jesus would instruct us that the common sense and reason of mankind, if they were fairly consulted, would favour the great design of religion, which means nothing else but to call man to the discharge of the important duties which he owes to his Heavenly Father, because common sense and reason must see the miserable infatuation of all those, who profess one thing with their lips, whilst in their hearts they pursue another, or, what amounts to the same, who have their understandings enlightened with the knowledge of truth, whilst their wills are defiled and misled by the love of evil.

In the concluding application of the parable the Blessed Jesus confirms the observation above made, that by the first son, there mentioned, are to be understood the Gentiles, or those who have not formed their understandings in agreement with the Eternal Truth; and that by the second son are to be understood the Jews, or those who were in possession of the Holy Word, and were thus acquainted with the laws and precepts of the divine wisdom. For, by the tax collectors and harlots, are manifestly meant the Gentiles, and the term you, with equal clearness, designates the Jews. In the above words, therefore, the Blessed Jesus evidently teaches the important lesson, that they who are principled in simplicity and sincerity of will; in other words, who are disposed to do the whole of their duty uprightly, and in the fear of God, although the knowledge of that duty is very incorrect, are better qualified to admit the Eternal Truth, than those who are acquainted,

intellectually, with the measures of their duty, and yet, in heart and affection, are not inclined to perform it. Accordingly, he declares, that the former go into the kingdom of God before the latter; because, by going into the kingdom of God, the same thing is meant as receiving the Eternal Truth, inasmuch as the reception of the Eternal Truth opens and forms in man the kingdom of God, and, consequently, man goes into the kingdom of God so far as he admits the Eternal Truth to enlighten his understanding, and regulate his love and life.

Jesus Christ, therefore, adds, *John came to you in the way of righteousness*, because, by John is represented the Holy Word, or the Eternal Truth; and by his coming in the way of righteousness, is described the presence and influence of that Word in the human mind, and also the principles which constitute it, namely, the principles of wisdom and of love; for, by the way of righteousness, or, as it might be more properly expressed, the way of justice, both those principles are intended to be expressed, inasmuch as the term way, when applied in the Sacred Scriptures, has perpetual reference to truth, or doctrine, as righteousness, or justice, has reference equally constant to the principles of love and charity. When, therefore, Jesus Christ tells the Jews that they believed him not, that is to say, believed not John, it is the same thing as if He had said, that they received not the Eternal Truth; and when He adds, that the tax collectors and harlots believed him, it is again the same thing as if He had said, that they, who are signified by tax collectors and harlots, received the Eternal Truth. Lastly, when he concludes in these words. *And you, when you had seen [it], repented not afterwards that you might believe*. He teaches the additional important lesson, that they who are principled in the knowledge of the truth, but are not obedient to its dictates, finally reject the truth, because they are unwilling to renounce these evils which the truth makes manifest, or, as it is here expressed, They repent not that they might believe. It is said, when you had seen [it], and it is next said, *You repented not afterwards that you might believe*, plainly teaching that there is an essential difference between seeing the truth and believing it, and that there can be no proper belief, only so far as there is a desire to forsake sin, or to repent. For it is possible that truth may be seen by the understanding, to be truth, when yet the will, or love, is not affected by it, but it cannot be believed in, until the will, or love, becomes so affected as to be led to reject all evil as sin against God, thus to repent.

We therefore learn from this parable, that all the families of mankind may be referred to two classes; one consisting of those who, in understanding, are acquainted with their duty, but who, in their wills, are not so well-disposed to practise it; and the other, consisting of those who are inclined to do their duty, but who are not so well instructed in the particulars which that duty requires. We learn, further, that each of these classes of mankind are called, by their Heavenly Father, to work today in his vineyard; in other words, to cherish eternally, in their minds and lives, all the principles of heaven-born truth, that so they may bring forth to all eternity the blessed fruits of heaven-born love and charity. Lastly, we learn, that they who have the light of knowledge in their understandings, but not the love of that light in their wills, make fair professions of obedience to the above call, whilst, in reality, they are disobedient, because they do not allow the light to remove their natural evils, and conduct them thus, in the way of repentance, to a state of purification and regeneration; and that, on the other hand, they who are well-disposed in will, but not so much enlightened in understanding, although they make no professions of obedience, are still obedient, because they suffer the little truth with which they are acquainted to control their natural evils, and bring their lives



under the regulations of heavenly order.

Let us now ponder well on the distinct characters of these two classes of people, until we see clearly that sincere obedience to the divine law, though attended with little knowledge of its particular requirements, is infinitely preferable to much knowledge, if unattended with love and practice. Let us further consider seriously, that our Heavenly Father is continually saying to us, as he says to his two sons in the parable, Son, go work today in my vineyard, and that our eternal happiness will depend on our obedience to the call, because our eternal happiness must of necessity depend on the measure and degree in which we admit and cherish in our mind and life the blessed principles of heaven-born love and wisdom. Lastly, through the grace and mercy of our Heavenly Father, let us repent sincerely of all our sins, that so we may no longer be like the proud Pharisees of old, who were acquainted with the law of salvation, and yet were disobedient to that law; but may rather be of the blessed character of those of whom it is written. They enter into the kingdom of God before you. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE HOUSEHOLDER WHO PLANTED A VINEYARD.

Matt. 21:33-41.

*There was a certain Householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into a far country; and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the tenants took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did to them likewise. But last of all he sent to them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? They say to Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other tenants, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

The Householder is the Incarnate God, whose name is Jesus Christ, and He is called a Householder because He is All in All in His house, which is Heaven and the Church.

By Jesus Christ being All in All in Heaven and the Church, is meant, that Heaven and the Church, or, what is the same thing, the angels of Heaven and men of the Church, are formed from, and sustained by, His divine love and wisdom, so that there is nothing in Heaven and the Church but what is under the guidance and government of those divine principles, consequently, under the guidance and government of Jesus Christ Himself.

That Heaven and the Church may with propriety be called the house of Jesus Christ is evident from this consideration, because they are so called in the Sacred Scriptures. For the temple built by Solomon is sometimes called a temple, and sometimes a house; and this is the case, too, with the temple seen in vision by Ezekiel. And since there is every reason to believe that both these temples, or houses, were types or figures of Heaven and the Church, therefore, there can be no impropriety in calling Heaven and the Church the Lord's house. Moreover, a house means a place to dwell in, and, according to this meaning, Heaven and the Church may fitly be called the house or habitation of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He dwells in angels and men, agreeably to his own words, where he says, *If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him* (John 14:23).

It is said of this Householder that *he planted a vineyard*. A vineyard is a place where vines grow; and by a vine is signified spiritual truth, which is the truth of God's Most Holy Word, spiritually understood, according to which sense, Jesus Christ calls Himself the True Vine. The vineyard, therefore, here spoken of, denotes the reception of such truth by the men of the Church; and, therefore, the men of the Church, or the receivers of such truth, are called by the Prophet, *The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, where it is written, The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant;* (Isaiah 5:7). for by the house of Israel and the men of Judah are meant the men of the Church.

As the vineyard, here spoken of, manifestly denotes a spiritual vineyard, so the hedge, by

which it is encompassed, must denote a spiritual hedge; the meaning of which may be discovered from the use of a natural hedge; the latter, as every one knows, is for defence, and also to distinguish a garden, a field, and vineyard, from that which is not a garden, a field, and vineyard. In like manner, a spiritual hedge is for the defence of a spiritual garden, field, or vineyard, and also to distinguish it from that which is not a spiritual garden, field, or vineyard.

The principles of mind and life which constitute this spiritual hedge are all those principles of heavenly love and wisdom which lead man to distinguish clearly in his own mind between good and evil, between truth and error, between what is of God, and what is not of God; thus, between heaven and hell, between light and darkness, between what makes an angel and what makes an infernal. For, in proportion to the clearness in which such distinctions are seen, will be the defence and security of the spiritual vineyard: not that defence and security arise from distinctions alone, but from the arrangement and order to which distinctions lead. For it is an eternal law that there can be no spiritual defence and security without arrangement and order; and there can be no arrangement and order without distinction of the principles which are to be arranged and brought into order; therefore it is necessary for every individual member of the Church, who wishes to secure his spiritual vineyard by its proper hedge, to distinguish well, in himself, between his internal and external man, also between his will, his understanding, and his operation; thus, between good and truth, between charity, faith, and good works, because his salvation depends, in a great measure, on the conjunction of these things in himself; and they can never be conjoined until they be first clearly seen and distinguished.

The meaning of the winepress, can only be discovered from the use of a natural winepress, which, every one knows, is to separate the juice of the grape from the husk, and thus to discover and make manifest the quality of the grapes which are pressed in it. For, before the grapes are put into the winepress, it is impossible to know whether they be good or bad grapes, sweet or sour, wholesome or unwholesome. In like manner, without exploration and examination of man's works, which are the fruits of his vineyard, it is impossible for him to know what is their proper quality, whether they be good works or evil works - works which will save, or works which will condemn him; and, hence, it is to be concluded, that exploration and examination form the true spiritual winepress which every wise householder digs in his vineyard.

The spiritual meaning of the tower, which the householder built in his vineyard, like that of the winepress, can only be learnt from the use of a natural tower; which use, as every one knows, is two-fold, namely, for observation and defence; for observation, in discovering the approach of an enemy, and for defence against an enemy when his approach *is* discovered. A natural tower, therefore, is an elevated building, to increase its power of observation; and it is also a strong building, to increase its power of defence. Exactly similar is the case of the spiritual tower, with this only difference, that the spiritual tower is designed for the observation of spiritual enemies, and for defence against them. The spiritual tower, therefore, consists of elevated thought, that is to say, thought derived from the truths of God's Most Holy Word, and exalted to conjunction with Jesus Christ and His kingdom, through the elevating power of heavenly love and charity; and such thought is capable of discovering the approach of spiritual enemies, and, at the same time, of defending itself against their assaults.

The power of observation, arising from a state of elevated thought, and the power of defence, in the spiritual idea, are one and the same thing; spiritual defence being, in all

cases, the result of elevated thought, as spiritual insecurity is at all times the effect of non-elevated thought. And the reason is, because elevated thought, as was observed, is thought exalted to conjunction with Jesus Christ, consequently to conjunction with His Omnipotence; whereas, non-elevated thought, not being connected with the Divine Omnipotence, has no power at all against spiritual adversaries.

By tenants, to whom the vineyard is said to be let out, are to be understood spiritual tenants; and by letting out the vineyard to such tenants is meant, the communicating to them the knowledge of the Eternal Truth, to the intent that they may cherish it in their hearts and lives until it brings forth its heavenly fruits of love and charity. In the same sense, the Lord is said to have placed the first man in the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it, because the garden of Eden, like the vineyard, here spoken of, was a figure of man's intellectual mind, stored with the rich and holy truths of God's Most Holy Word; and to dress and keep this garden, is to preserve those holy truths from decay, that so they may bring forth their proper fruits of heavenly love, and life, and peace.

By the Householder, it has been already seen, is meant, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and by his going into a far country is to be understood his apparent absence, whilst man is under the first insemination of truth; for, during such insemination, he is necessarily led to conceive that God is afar off, nor can he possibly get quit of this sentiment, until the truth produces its fruit of love and charity; for it is the spirit of love and charity which alone brings God near to man, and removes all idea of distance and separation.

The time of the fruit drawing near, denotes the period when truth, received in the understanding, begins to affect the will and its love; for the fruit, here spoken of, is the fruit of the spiritual vineyard, and the fruit of the spiritual vineyard is nothing else but love and charity, and the good works to which they give birth. For, in the kingdom of grace, as in that of nature, there is a variety of seasons, answering to the four seasons of the year, called Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Spring is a season distinguished by the first insemination and reception of the Eternal Truth in the human understanding. Summer is the season when such truth enters and operates on the will, or love, and produces in it its own heavenly fruits of righteousness, joy, and peace. Autumn is the season when the above fruit is brought to its maturity. And Winter is the season of spiritual trial and temptation, in which the plants of heavenly truth take deeper root in the faithful and patient mind, and are thus prepared for future seasons of increased fruitfulness and use.

By the servants, sent by the Householder to receive the fruits of the vineyard, are to be understood, the teachers of Holy Truth, and thus, the truths which they teach, especially respecting God, as the sole Author of all that is good in man, consequently, as the sole Proprietor of all the fruits of man's spiritual vineyard. Not that God, for His own sake, wishes to be regarded as such a Proprietor, but for the sake of man, because it is for the happiness of man that he should acknowledge - and acknowledge gratefully - that all the fruits of his vineyard, that is to say, all his love and charity, all his good words and works, all his joys and delights, are from God, and, therefore, properly belong to God.

But it is said, that *the tenants took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.*

By taking the servants is to be understood, that they apprehended the truths of God's Holy Word in their understandings; but that this apprehension was confined to the understanding, and did not extend its influence to the will, is plain, from its being said

afterwards, that they *beat one, killed another, and stoned another*: which expressions denote the different methods of treatment of the Eternal Truth by those who are not willing to submit to its guidance and government. For, to beat the servants, denotes the perversion of truth by evils of life; to kill the servants, denotes to deprive truth of its life, by separating it from the spirit of love and charity; and to stone the servants, denotes to falsify truth, by applying it to the confirmation of what is evil and false,

*The Householder* (it is said) *again sent other servants more than the first, and they did to them likewise*. From which words we learn, that the Almighty is not satisfied with presenting only one message to His children to require their love and obedience; but, if His first message fails, He multiplies His invitations, being desirous, out of His tender love, to try every possible method of converting them to Himself, that so He may bless them with all the blessings of His Divine Love and Wisdom from Himself.

By the Householder sending His Son, is meant, God manifest in the flesh; for whether we speak of God sending His Son into the world, or of God manifesting Himself in the flesh, it is the same thing, denoting that, in the fullness of time the Eternal Jehovah, the Creator of all things, descended here on earth, and assumed the Humanity, which He afterwards glorified, or made one with Himself, and all this for the purpose of effecting the salvation of man, by subduing his spiritual enemies, and by giving him continual access to Himself in His Glorified or Divine Humanity.

The words, *They will reverence my Son*, were intended to teach, that no expectation could be more reasonable, than that the Incarnate God, when He appeared upon earth to instruct, to bless, and to save His, otherwise lost, creatures, would have been kindly and affectionately received by them; as, on the other hand, no expectation could be more unreasonable, than that the Maker of the world, coming down to restore to it His peace and love, should be treated with indignity, and, finally, be rejected, crucified, slain, and thus cast out of His own vineyard which Himself had planted, and the fruitfulness of which He was desirous of promoting.

It is said, that *when the tenants saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance*.

By the Son is meant, God manifested in the human nature; and by seeing Him is to be understood, an apprehension of this truth in the understanding, for every one may be said to see the Son of God who receives, in his intellectual mind, any knowledge concerning his manifestation in the flesh.

In the original it is expressed, they said *in themselves*, to denote that this was the interior thought and purpose of their hearts, to destroy in themselves the revealed truth concerning the manifestation of God in the flesh, because they discerned clearly, that if they admitted this truth to rule in their minds, they could no longer live to themselves and the world as they delighted to do. With the destruction of this truth, respecting the Incarnate God, was connected the additional thought and purpose of seizing on his inheritance, because the inheritance of God is the heart of man; and to seize on this inheritance, is to remove the heart from God, that it may live to itself, without God, as every wicked and unbelieving man lives, by persuading himself that his life is his own, and not God's, and, thus, that he is his own lord and master, independent of God, and of His righteous laws.

By taking him, and casting him out of the vineyard, is to be understood, the closing of their understandings against the bright light of the Eternal Truth announcing the Incarnate God; and by killing him is to be understood, that they voluntarily destroyed in themselves

the life of heavenly love and charity, which is the essential life of the Incarnate God.

Jesus Christ here proposes a question in the following words: *When, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?* Observe, that Jesus Christ does not Himself pronounce sentence upon the wicked tenants, but puts his hearers on the inquiry concerning it, of which the reason appears to be this, that the punishment of the wicked does not come from Jesus Christ, but from themselves, although the appearance is as if it came from Jesus Christ alone, and not at all from themselves. To lead men, therefore, to correct this appearance, that so they may discover what is the true source and origin of all punishment, Jesus Christ proposes the above significant question.

Then follows the sentence itself, *He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out the vineyard to other tenants, who will render him the fruits in their season.* We learn from these words, that all evil brings upon itself its own destruction; in other words, that wicked men destroy themselves, although, to appearance, they are destroyed by God. We learn, also, the manner of their destruction, that it is by separating themselves from all communication with the Eternal Truth, and, thus, with Heaven, where the Eternal Truth is All in All. This separation is signified by the vineyard being let out to other tenants, for the vineyard is the knowledge of the Eternal Truth; and to be let out to other tenants denotes, therefore, that this knowledge was taken away from those who abused it, to be given to those who would profit by it. We learn, therefore, further, from the above words, a signal proof of the Divine mercy of the Most High, which leads Him ever to communicate to mankind the saving-knowledge of Himself, that so He may rule in their hearts and bless them; and when this saving knowledge is rejected by one people, it never fails to be immediately imparted to another. Thus, the Divine Providence is continually operative to establish a church of pure worshippers here on earth, with a view, at once to extend its blessings, to find for itself an habitation, and to provide for the increase and support of the angelic kingdom.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

Matt. 22:1-15.

*And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables, and said, The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain King, who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth, his servants to call them that were invited to the wedding: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fattened cattle are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the King heard thereof, he was angry: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then says he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were invited were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he says to him, Friend, how do you deserve to be in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.*

By the Kingdom of Heaven is to be understood, the government and guidance of the Divine Love and Wisdom of Jesus Christ; for Heaven is Heaven, by virtue of the reception of Divine Love and Wisdom; and it is called a kingdom, from the government and guidance of that Love and Wisdom.

This Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain King who made a marriage for his Son, because, by the King, who here made a marriage for his Son, is to be understood, the Supreme Divinity, called Jehovah, in the Old Testament, and Father, in the New, uniting Himself with the Humanity which He assumed here on earth in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This union is called a marriage, and, therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is like this marriage, because the Kingdom of Heaven is formed from an union of similar principles, namely, from heavenly Love and heavenly Wisdom, or, what is the same thing, from heavenly Good and heavenly Truth.

By the servants whom the King sent forth are to be understood, the ministers of God, or the teachers of His Most Holy Word; and since the things which those, ministers teach are the truths of that Word, therefore, by the servants here spoken of, are to be understood those truths themselves, which may be considered as ministering, or subservient to the heavenly good of Love and Charity, to which they point.

It is the intent of the revelation of God, which He has been pleased to make to mankind in His Holy Word, to invite them to an eternal conjunction with Himself, by the reception of His own Love and Wisdom. There is not, therefore, a single truth contained in that revelation but what points to such conjunction, and was intended to conduct man to a participation of its eternal blessedness. This, therefore, is what is signified by the servants

calling them that were invited to the marriage.

The expressions rendered in our translation, *call* and *invited*, are the same in the original tongue, and, therefore, the passage ought to have been given, to call them that were called to the marriage.

Now, the call to the heavenly marriage is actually two-fold; because it is, first, a call of the understanding, and, secondly, a call of the will.

Man is called to the heavenly marriage in his understanding, when he first receives the knowledge of the eternal Truth, and is thus made acquainted with God and His kingdom, and, at the same time, with that rule of life which conducts to God and His Kingdom. This call, however, is not of itself sufficient to introduce him into Heaven and conjunction with God, because no knowledge is of itself competent to that purpose. It is necessary, therefore, when a sufficient store of knowledge has been implanted, that he be called a second time, to bring such knowledge into practice, by forming his life, accordingly; and when this is effected, then his will, or love, is united with his understanding, and, by this double call, he is introduced to the marriage, because the heavenly marriage is, and means, nothing else but such conjunction.

In the original, instead of *they would not come*, the expression is, *they were not willing to come*, to instruct us that it was the abuse of their free will which prevented their coming, and that, consequently, they wanted the inclination, but not the power, to come, for every one is gifted, by his Almighty Creator, with the faculty of choosing for himself either good or evil, which was signified by the two trees planted in the garden of Eden. But all good is of God and of His kingdom, and all evil is of the Devil and his kingdom. Every man, therefore, is gifted with the faculty of choosing God and the things of His kingdom, or the Devil and the things of his kingdom; and he chooses either the one or the other, according to the determination of his love, or, what is the same thing, of his supreme joy or delight. For, if he loves himself only, and the things of this world, in preference to God and the things of His kingdom, he then chooses evil in preference to good, and thus abuses his free-will. But if he loves God and the things of His kingdom, in preference to himself and the things of this world, he then chooses good instead of evil, and, in so doing, he applies his free-will according to the happy purposes for which it was given him by his merciful Creator.

By the other servants, whom the King sent forth, are to be understood, other applications of the Divine Truth, or the Divine Truth expressed in another form. Thus, for instance, it is the same Divine Truth which is expressed in the writings of Moses, and in the writings of the Prophets; but the form of expression is varied in each, and it is this variety of expression, and not of the truth itself, which is alluded to in this account of the other servants here said to be sent forth by the heavenly King.

The term *behold*, is a term applied to excite attention to the subject which follows, in the present case, therefore, to the dinner which was prepared, to instruct us that this dinner is a subject worthy all attention, and better deserving it than any other, because it is a subject to which the attention called by God Himself, and God never calls man to attend to anything but what is most worthy of his attention.

The term *dinner* is used to express all consociation of Love and Charity, because all feasts, whether they were dinners or suppers, were originally ordained for the purpose of cherishing such consociation. By the dinner, therefore, being prepared, is to be understood, that the Almighty had provided every thing necessary for the establishment of



such consociation of Love and Charity between angels in heaven and men upon earth. Thus, by this part of the invitation, all mankind are called to enter into consociation of Love and Charity with the angelic kingdom, and in so doing, to eat of their bread, and drink of their cup, according as it is written, *Man did eat angels food, and he gave them bread to the full* (Psalm 78:25).

The oxen and fattened cattle denote different kinds and degrees of heavenly good, which constitute the King's dinner, and in this view, the various animals appointed for sacrifice, under the old law, are to be considered as representative of some heavenly principles of life which were required to be acknowledged as coming from God, and to be offered up to God. In the present case, therefore, oxen and fattened cattle are applied to denote all those heavenly affections, both natural and spiritual, which are implanted in man by his Heavenly Father, and which alone conjoin God with man and man with God.

It is written, *all things are ready*. By all things are meant, all things on the part of God necessary for man's regeneration, whether they be internal or external; and by their being ready is to be understood, that they are always at hand with man, and waiting to be formed into his life, whenever he is disposed, in his free will, to admit them.

The invitation, *come to the marriage*, implies a most gracious call of the divine mercy and loving-kindness of the Most High to every individual of the human race, pressing and inviting him to an eternal conjunction of life, of blessing, and of protection, with Himself and His kingdom. It implies, further, a call to every man to conjoin in his own heart and life the eternal principles of heavenly Love and Wisdom, or, what is the same thing, of Charity and Faith, because the former conjunction of man with his God depends entirely upon the accomplishment of this latter conjunction of the above heavenly principles in his own mind and life.

To make light of a thing, is to account it of little value, and to be but little affected by it; and, therefore, to make light of the invitation to come to the marriage, implies, that the persons invited thought the heavenly marriage a thing of little value, and were but little affected by it. For such is the case with the impenitent, the thoughtless, and unconverted. Even Heaven itself appears in their eyes as a trifling and insignificant possession, whilst the things of this world seem to be the only grand objects which deserve their attention. Thus, they mistake entirely the nature of true greatness; calling that great which in itself is little, and that little which in itself is great; and, by a terrible perversion of their faculties, they invert all order, setting themselves above God, earth above heaven, temporal things above eternal, and death above life.

My going away is to be understood, a separation of themselves from that eternal conjunction with God and Heaven which was proffered to their acceptance. And this was a natural and necessary consequence of their making light of it, since no man was ever known to draw near with his affections to any object of which he thinks vilely and contemptibly. Man will, of course, separate himself from Heaven in the degree that his affections are not interested in its important realities; nor will he ever draw near, as he ought, to the blessed kingdom, except in proportion as his understanding is enlightened, and his will purified, to see and to feel that the things of that kingdom merit his regard and esteem infinitely above all other things whatsoever.

In the sense of the letter, one going to his field, and another to his merchandise, expresses the preference which men usually give to worldly concerns and occupations above the concerns and occupations of eternal life; but, in the spiritual sense it means, that they

prefer natural good to spiritual good, and natural truth to spiritual truth; for, in a spiritual sense, a man's field (or, as the original has it, his *own field*) denotes his will, or love; and merchandise denotes his understanding, or truth.

The next words describe the methods by which wicked and unbelieving men destroy, in themselves, the heavenly truths of God's most Holy Word; for, by the servants here spoken of, as was shown above, are meant those truths which are destroyed in men's minds, principally by two methods; first, by vilifying them, or making them appear contemptible in their understandings; and, secondly, by depriving them of the life of love and charity in their wills. The first method is expressed by entreating them spitefully, and the second, by slaying them.

It is said, that *when the King heard thereof he was angry*. Anger and wrath are frequently attributed to God, in the Sacred Scriptures, not that it is to be supposed that any such qualities, or properties, exist in the Divine Being, who, in Himself, is, and ever must be, the purest and most essential mercy, love, goodness, and compassion. But the contrary qualities of wrath, anger, and vengeance, are attributed to Him in the same way that repentance is attributed to Him, though it is plain that God never repents, as He Himself also declares. The reason, then, why God is said to be angry and wrathful, as well as to repent, is, because the Sacred Scriptures are written according to appearances, and, if they were not so written, they could not have been adapted to the apprehension of the natural man. The appearance, therefore, is, that God is angry and wrathful with the wicked, and that He also repents of His purposes, but the real truth is, that He never repents, neither is He ever angry or wrathful, and that if He appears so, it is owing to the wickedness of man, who always supposes that God is angry with him, and ready to punish his wicked deeds. Every man, therefore, in this respect, makes his own God, according to the idea which he forms of God; and, consequently, a wicked man sees nothing, and can see nothing, but a God of anger and wrath, whilst a good man sees nothing, and can see nothing, but a God of mercy and love. It is accordingly written, *with the pure you will show yourself pure, and with the perverse you will show yourself perverse*.

The armies of the Lord, or, as they are sometimes called, His host, denote the angelic host, when applied in a good sense, as executing the purposes of salvation; but when applied in a contrary sense, as in the present case, for the purpose of destruction, they denote the powers of darkness; in which sense it is written, in another place, concerning the rebellious Israelites, that the Lord sent evil angels among them. Not that it is to be supposed that the merciful Lord sends evil, or evil angels, among any people, but that the wicked and impenitent, by their wickedness and impenitence, plunge themselves into wretched association with those spirits of darkness.

All wicked people are called *murderers*, because they kill and murder in themselves the life of heavenly Love and Charity, which is the life of God and of His kingdom; and God is said to destroy such murderers, when, in reality, they destroy themselves, by separating themselves from the mercy, the blessing and protection of Heaven, for whatsoever is so separated must of necessity be destroyed, since spiritual destruction is but another term to express alienation from God, as spiritual salvation is but another term to express conjunction with God in His own life of heavenly love and wisdom.

City is used in a spiritual sense, like all other expressions in the parable, and, according to that sense, denotes the interior principles and persuasions which occupy the minds of men, and in which they dwell. When it is said, therefore, that the King *burnt up their city*, the word city is used to denote the principles and persuasions of the wicked, which are

said to be burned up, when they are consumed and perish by the cravings which give them birth. Mention is accordingly made, in the Sacred Scriptures, of the city of destruction, and also of the city of the Lord of Hosts; the former denoting the principles and persuasions in which the ungodly dwell, as to their spirits; and the latter, denoting the principles and persuasions in which the righteous dwell, as to their spirits.

But it is said, *the wedding is ready, but they who were invited were not worthy*. Man is said to be worthy when he complies freely and voluntarily with the counsels of the Eternal Truth; in which case he exalts the Eternal Truth above everything belonging to himself, and thus ascribes to the God of Truth all merit, and, consequently, all worth. Man, therefore, is called worthy, in proportion as he takes no worth to himself, but humbly and gratefully acknowledges that no one is worthy but Him of whom it is written, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing* (Rev. 5:12). On the other hand, man is said to be not worthy, when he is unwilling to admit into his mind that heavenly wisdom which would teach him that all worthiness, properly so called, belongs to God, and that man is only so far worthy as he willingly makes this acknowledgement.

It is afterwards written, that the King sent his servants into the highways, to invite to the marriage as many as they should find. In the original language, the term which is here rendered highways, is expressed by a word which more properly denotes crossways. It is impossible, however, to discover what is meant by crossways, unless it be first known what is spiritually understood by a way. Now, a spiritual way, is the way, or direction, of every one's will and understanding, in regard to the things of God and another world: and the way of every one's will and understanding is the way or direction of his supreme love, because every one follows, and must, of necessity, follow, wherever his supreme love leads him. According to this view of spiritual ways, they will be found to be as various and as numerous as natural ways, and, therefore they may be distinguished, and are distinguished, in the Sacred Scriptures, into highways, bye ways, and what are here called crossways. Hence, then, may be seen what is spiritually meant by the crossways mentioned in the parable, and that they relate to the states of the minds of those who are walking in ignorance of genuine truth, and who thus do not proceed in a straight path to the kingdom of Heaven. For genuine truth is the highway, and the only highway, to Heaven and eternal blessedness, and, consequently, they who are not in the light of genuine truth do not walk in a highway, but in a crossway. The King's command, therefore, to his servants, to go into the crossways, relates to the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the true God, and thus, into the way of genuine truth, for the Gentiles, being in ignorance, were not walking in the highway to the heavenly kingdom, and, consequently, could not come to the marriage until they were better instructed.

It is next said, that *those servants went into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests*. It is agreeable to the order of the Divine Providence, that all mankind should be instructed in the knowledge of God and the things of His kingdom, since, without instruction, no one can be a subject either of happiness or of misery, properly so called; neither can any one, without instruction, be denominated either good or bad: for what constitutes a good man, is his willingness to obey instructions, by forming his life according to it; and what constitutes a bad man, is his unwillingness to obey instruction, and to suffer it to operate upon his life. The difference, therefore, between a good man and a bad man, is, not that the one receives instruction and the other rejects it, but that the one attains to the heavenly

good of love and charity, to which instruction points, whilst the other does not attain it: the one, therefore, removes from his heart and life all the evils which instruction makes manifest; whilst the other, notwithstanding instruction, still remains the slave of his corruptions; thus the one admits the truth of instruction into the interiors of his heart and life, where it begets and forms its own image and likeness of heavenly wisdom and purity, whilst the other suffers instruction to enter no further than his memory, where it continues as in an outer court, and never gains admission into the inmost recesses of the heart.

By the King, who *came in to see the guests*, is to be understood, the Almighty Lord and Sovereign of the Universe, whose name is Jesus Christ; and this heavenly King is said to come in when He comes to His Church, whether in general, or in particular, by the influx, or influence, of His Holy Spirit. For the King of Heaven cannot come into His Church, in general, or to any member of His Church, in particular, in any other way than this. But in this way of influx, or influence, He may be said to be always coming in for inspection, for judgement, and for purification.

By a garment, according to the spiritual idea, is meant, that which invests, or clothes, a man's spirit; and every man's spirit is clothed according to the persuasions which he believes to be true. For every man's spirit is his ruling love, and love always invests, or clothes, itself with persuasions which are in agreement with itself- with the persuasions of truth, therefore, if the love be in agreement with truth, but with the persuasions of error, if it be not in agreement with truth. It is on this account that, when the Lord was transfigured, He was seen in shining garments, as were also the angels who appeared at His sepulchre; because shining garments denote the splendour and brightness of divine and heavenly truth, investing divine and heavenly good.

This being the meaning of a spiritual garment, we may understand a wedding-garment to denote, the persuasion of truth in conjunction with the heavenly love and charity, in which it originates, thus, in conjunction with Jesus Christ, who is the only source and fountain of all heavenly love and charity. When, therefore, it is said, that the man *had not on a wedding-garment*, it is to denote that his persuasions were not grounded in love and charity, and, consequently, were not in conjunction with those heavenly principles. And this is the unhappy case with all those who imbibe, with their understandings, the doctrines of heavenly truth but do not apply those doctrines to the reformation of their lives, by rejecting those evils which the truth makes manifest, and by cherishing those goods of heaven and eternal life to which it points and conducts. Whosoever, then, maintains that he may be saved by faith alone, without charity and good works, and that he may thus be admitted into Heaven after death, provided that, in the last hour of his life, he believes in the atoning blood and merit of the Redeemer, is seen by the all-piercing eye of the Eternal King, as a man that has not on a wedding-garment. In like manner, whoever separates religion from the common duties and engagements of life, by insisting that religion has nothing to do with those duties and engagements, and that a man may live as he pleases, provided he is only constant and regular in his public and private devotions, he also ranks amongst those deluded ones who come to the wedding without having on a wedding-garment.

In the original tongue, the title is not so honourable as that expressed by the word friend, addressed to the man which had not on a wedding-garment, but one is used which, more properly, signifies companion.

Every one knows the distinction, in a natural sense, between those two terms, because every one knows that, in a natural sense, a companion means one with whom we

occasionally associate, but whom we do not admit to any great degree of intimacy, so as to take him to our bosoms, and entrust him with our secrets; whereas, a friend means one with whom we not only associate occasionally, but who is so connected with us in the bonds of love and affection, that we find our highest delight in his society, and are never so happy as in the interchange of mutual regard, confidence and attachment. Exactly similar is the distinction, in a spiritual sense, because, according to this sense, a spiritual companion, in respect to God, is one who, by reading the Word of God, is admitted to some degree of acquaintance with God, by receiving the light of the knowledge of God in his understanding, but whereas he does not receive, at the same time, the love of God in his will, nor suffers it to operate in his life, he never attains to any higher, or nearer, intimacy with his Heavenly Father. A spiritual friend, on the other hand, is one who, with respect to God, not only admits into his understanding the knowledge of God and of His law, but applying that knowledge to the reformation of his life, cherishes devoutly in his heart the love of God and of his neighbour, and thus attains to the high and unspeakable honour of being admitted to the closest intimacy and conjunction with the Father of his being, in all those virtues and graces of love, confidence, and regard, which constitute the endearing relationship of friend.

The question, *How do you deserve to be in here, not having a wedding-garment?* appears intended to put the man upon a course of self-examination, respecting the motives of his conduct in rejecting the life of charity, and insisting on the sufficiency of faith alone to introduce him into the kingdom of Heaven. It was intended, further, that, by such examination, he should be led to the discovery, that nothing can be so irrational and contrary to the express declarations of the Word of God, as to imagine that man can be saved by a mere act of speculative faith, separate from repentance and the good works which flow from charity and the love of God. And, lastly, it was intended to lead all mankind to reject the idea of solitary faith, and to admit, in its place, the evangelical persuasion, that charity, faith, and good works, are, unitedly, necessary to secure man's salvation, and that to separate any one of these essentials from the other, is to destroy all, and thus to destroy the church, both generally and individually.

By being speechless is meant, in the letter, that the man had nothing to answer; but in the spirit, or spiritual sense, is meant, that no just reason could be assigned for his acting in a manner so altogether unreasonable and opposite to the whole tenor of the counsels of the Eternal. For all speech is merely an expression of the thoughts; and, therefore, where there is no speech, as in the present case, it denotes that there is no thought, that is to say, no just thought. Thus, it denotes, that the separation of charity from faith, and of faith from charity, is the destruction of all just thought, of all sound reason, of all true wisdom, and of all evangelical truth and evangelical religion.

By the injunction, *bind him, hand and foot*, is implied, the spiritual imprisonment into which all men cast themselves who do not join to their knowledge, obedience, or a life according to knowledge.

This imprisonment of all the faculties of the mind is both internal and external; the former, signified by binding the hand, and the latter, by binding the foot.

It consists in the deprivation of the spiritual powers with which all men are, by birth, invested, namely, the powers of looking upwards towards God and Heaven - of opening thus, and forming the internal, spiritual man - of admitting, through this the divine influences into the external, or natural, man - and of thus attaining eternal conjunction with the Almighty, through the free and voluntary admission of His love, wisdom, and

operation, into every part and principle, both of mind and body.

By the second injunction, take him away, is implied, the separation from the heavenly marriage, or from Heaven itself, of all those who are so unwise as not to attain to that marriage, by the conjunction of charity and faith, or of love and wisdom, in their own minds and lives. It appears, in this case, as in the former of spiritual imprisonment, that the effect is produced by the sentence of the Almighty, when, nevertheless, it is the necessary result of carelessness on the part of man. For it is well to be noted, that no one can attain conjunction with the Almighty, but by the conjunction of charity and faith in his own mind and life. When charity and faith, therefore, are not thus conjoined, the man, voluntarily, and of his own accord, separates himself from the kingdom of light and love, because there are no principles in himself congenial with that kingdom and its joys. It is not, therefore, in the power of the Almighty Himself, to introduce any one into Heaven, unless heavenly love and heavenly wisdom be previously combined in his affections and thoughts, for this would be to act contrary to His own order, that is to say, contrary to Himself, which is a thing impossible.

The sentence, *cast him into outer darkness*, like the foregoing, is a consequence resulting from the state of man's mind, rather than from the judgement, or condemnation, of the Almighty. For when a man admits into his understanding the light of heavenly truth, and neglects to form his life accordingly, he then converts the light into darkness, which, being more dense and grievous than the darkness of mere ignorance, is, on that account, called outer, or extreme, darkness, agreeably to that declaration of Jesus Christ, where He says, *If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness*. By outer darkness, is, therefore, here to be understood, the darkness into which the men of the church cast themselves, who enjoy and admit the light of revelation, but who yet are not willing to submit their minds and lives entirely to its heavenly guidance.

The two terms, *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, denote the extreme opposition to the principles of heavenly love and wisdom in all those who cast themselves into outer darkness; weeping being an act of the body, expressive of opposition to heavenly love; and gnashing of teeth being an act of the body, expressive of opposition to heavenly wisdom, or truth. The reason why weeping denotes opposition to heavenly love, is, because weeping is opposed to heavenly joy, and all heavenly joy is the effect of heavenly love. They, therefore, who cast themselves into outer darkness, must, of necessity, be deprived of heavenly joy, and, of course, oppose the principle from which it proceeds. And the reason why gnashing of teeth denotes opposition to heavenly truth, is, because, in the Sacred Scriptures, frequent mention is made of gnashing of teeth, and, in all cases, it is applied to express a rooted hatred of, and opposition to, the principles of heavenly wisdom and truth in which sense it is applied, Acts 7:54, Ps. 112:10, Ps. 35:16, Sam. 2:16, Job 16:9, and: Mark 9:18. It is added, in conclusion of the parable, *many are called, but few are chosen*.

The called are all they who receive an invitation to the heavenly marriage, by hearing and reading the Word of God, which is, throughout, an invitation to that marriage. But the chosen are they, who not only hear and read the Word of God, like the called, and thus receive an invitation to the marriage, but who, likewise, accept the invitation, by willing, thinking, and doing, such things as the Word of God enjoins. The called, therefore, are they who receive the instruction of wisdom; but the chosen are they who obey that instruction. The called, again, are they who have the understanding of truth; but the chosen are they who unite to that understanding the love of heavenly good. In short, the

called are they who have attained to some communication with the light of Heaven in their intellectual part; but the chosen are they who have attained conjunction with the life of Heaven in their voluntary, or will, part. These latter, therefore, are termed the elect, or chosen, because God always chooses those who love Him, and not those who merely know Him; thus, He chooses those who delight in doing His will, but not those who only understand what His will requires.

We learn, in general, from this parable, that it is the will of the Most High to conjoin Himself, by means of His holy love and wisdom, with all mankind, and that, accordingly, He invites and presses all mankind to come and be partakers of this heavenly marriage, or conjunction. We learn, further, that this divine invitation, which God sends to all His creatures, by and through His Holy Word, is treated differently by men, according to their several passions, prejudices, and ways of life; some making light of it, and others treating it with contempt, neglect, and abhorrence. We learn, still further, that God, by His divine inspection, is ever noting the manner in which His Holy Word is treated by mankind, and how far they are careful to unite love and wisdom, or charity and faith, together in their minds and lives. And, lastly, we learn, that no man can be admitted to the heavenly marriage, or, what is the same thing, to the kingdom of Heaven, only so far as the above principles are conjoined in him; since, if they be separated, he then casts himself into the imprisonment of his best faculties, - separates himself from all communion with his Heavenly Father, - and plunges into that terrible darkness, where he hates and opposes the influence of that heavenly love and heavenly wisdom which would, otherwise have conducted him to salvation and eternal life. Let us, therefore, resolve, now on, to take heed that we never separate in ourselves the principles of love and wisdom, charity and faith; but, that, combining those principles in our minds and lives, and suffering them to have their full operation in our conduct, we may not only rank under those who are called, but also be admitted to the high honour of those who are chosen, and thus enter into an eternal conjunction of life and love with our Heavenly Father, which is the true marriage and marriage-feast to which He has been pleased, in His mercy, to invite us.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE FIG TREE.

Matt. 24:32-34.

*Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near; so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.*

By learning a parable from the fig tree is meant, to learn instruction from what is signified by a fig tree, with its branches and leaves, which are afterwards mentioned; and, therefore, before this instruction can be learned, it will be necessary to consider what is signified and represented by a fig tree, with its branches and leaves.

A fig tree, whenever it is spoken of in the Holy Word, always signifies and represents the good of the natural principle of man's life, as a vine signifies and represents the good of his spiritual principle. By the good of the natural principle, is not meant the good into which man is born, or which he derives from his parents, but the good which is spiritual as to origin, and into which no one is born, but is introduced of the Lord by the knowledges of good and of truth; wherefore, before man is in this good, namely, in spiritual good, he is not a man of the church, however he appears to be so from natural good. If, then, the fig tree signifies and represents such natural good, its branches will denote the affections of that good, because affection buds forth from good, as a branch from its trunk; and, for the same reason, its leaves will denote the truths of that good, because truths are to the mind of man what leaves are to a tree.

The term rendered tender in our translation is expressed, in the original, by a word which means soft; and the term soft is applied to denote what is inmost and innocent, and thus in the present case, is intended to express the inmost principle of innocence from the Lord which is in the affection of natural good; thus by its putting forth leaves, is further signified its fruitfulness in the truths of innocence, or in truths of a celestial origin.

By summer, according to the spiritual idea, derived from the doctrine of correspondence between things spiritual and things natural, is to be understood, the conjunction of good and of truth in the Church here on earth; since, as natural heat and light are conjoined in the natural summer, in like manner spiritual heat and light, which are goodness and truth in the minds of men, are conjoined in the spiritual summer. By summer, therefore, is here spiritually meant the commencement of a new Church; and by its being near is, further, to be understood, the establishment of this Church whenever the branch of the fig tree becomes tender, and puts forth leaves; in other words, whenever the affection of natural good is influenced by innocence, and productive of truths from a celestial origin.

The import of the next words can only be known from considering what is meant by the things spoken of, which they were to see; and this cannot be known but by reference to the former part of the chapter, in which an affecting account is given by Jesus Christ, of the successive corruptions of the Christian Church, under its several fattened cattle away from evangelical purity and truth. These fattened cattle away may be, described in the following summary, containing prediction concerning the devastation of the Church, and,



at length, concerning the establishment of a new Church in this order:

1. That they began not to know what was good and true, but disputed on the subject.
2. That they despised good and truth.
3. That in heart they did not acknowledge those principles.
4. That they profaned them.
5. And whereas the truth of faith and the good of charity were yet about to remain with some who were called the elect; the state of faith on the occasion is described.
6. And next the state of charity.
7. And, lastly, the beginning of a new Church is treated of.

These, therefore, are the things which they were to see, and when they saw them, they were to know that it was near, even at the doors; in other words, that then would be the consummation of the Church, that is, the last judgement, and the coming of the Lord; consequently, that then the old Church would be rejected and a new one established. It is said, at the doors, because the good of the natural principle and its truths are the first things which are insinuated into man, when he is regenerated, and is made a church. It accordingly follows, *Verily, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away* (verses 34, 35), to denote, first, that the Jewish nation shall not be extirpated as other nations; and, secondly, that the internals and externals of the former Church, here signified by heaven and earth, shall perish, but that the Word of the Lord shall remain.

We learn, from this parable, to adore again the wisdom of our God and Saviour, as peculiarly manifested by His usual mode of expressing His own divine ideas by natural images, or by the representation of natural things. Thus, in the present instance, we are instructed, that under the natural figure of a fig tree, its branches, and leaves, He describes, in the most appropriate language, the commencement of a glorious new Church, which was to succeed on the declension of the former Church from its original purity; and, further, under the natural figure of summer, He describes the conjunction of goodness and truth, or of spiritual heat and spiritual light, in that Church, by virtue of which it was to be fruitful in all heavenly graces and virtues, and thus to have living conjunction with its Heavenly Father. We are instructed, yet further, to attend carefully to the several predictions uttered in the verses preceding this parable, until we discover from them the several states of the declension of the first Christian Church from its original purity; and we are, besides, consoled with the prospect and the certainty of that glorious new Church which is to succeed it, and which may convince us, that what is commonly called the last judgement, and the coming of the Lord, is not for the purpose of destroying the earth, but of preserving it, by imparting to mankind the pure and heavenly doctrines of the eternal truth, which were prefigured in the Revelation by the descent of the new Jerusalem. Thus may we humbly hope, that, through the mercy of God, the branch of the fig tree with us may become tender, and put forth leaves, whereby we may be convinced, to our unutterable joy, that the summer of the divine benediction of the Most High is near at hand, consisting in the conjunction of His most blessed love and wisdom, and that thus, though heaven and earth pass away, His word shall not pass away. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE TEN VIRGINS.

Matt. 25:1-13.

*Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be like ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the Bridegroom was a long time in coming they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say to you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to ten virgins, because by the Kingdom of Heaven is to be understood, the government of the divine love and wisdom; and by the ten virgins are denoted, all those of the Church to whom this government is presented for salvation and eternal happiness.

Lumps, when the term is used in the Sacred Scriptures, always denote the truths of God's Most Holy Word, in which sense it is written, *Your word is a lamp to my feet* (Ps. 119:105).

By the Bridegroom is meant the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or the incarnate God, who is called a bridegroom in regard to His bride the Church, according to which idea He speaks of Himself when He says to His disciples, *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn when the Bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast* (Matt. 9:15, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34). By the virgins going forth, therefore, to meet the Bridegroom, is to be understood, their preparation to enter into the presence of Jesus Christ, and into a state of communication and conjunction with Him.

It is said, that *five of these virgins were wise, and five were foolish*, and this is explained in the following verses of the parable, where it is written, *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil in them; but the wine took oil in their vessels with their lamps*. By taking their lamps and taking no oil in them, is signified, that they received the truths of God's Most Holy Word in their understandings, which is meant by taking their lamps; but they did not admit into their wills the good of heavenly love and charity, which is meant by oil, to which good the truths of God's Word were designed to conduct them. And this is the eternal distinction between folly and wisdom, because nothing is true wisdom but a life according to the knowledge of the truth, and nothing is so great a proof of human folly as to receive knowledge and not to apply it to the purposes of a good life for which it was given. Man, therefore, is not wise, merely because he knows what is true and good, but he becomes wise by forming his life accordingly; neither can he properly be called

foolish, merely because he is ignorant of truth and knowledge, but he becomes foolish in the degree in which he neglects to improve and amend his life according to the knowledge of truth which he has received.

It may be proved that oil signifies the good of love and charity, from the continual application of the term, both in the Old and New Testament, since, wherever it is used, it is intended to express some communication with the Almighty in the heavenly principle of his own mercy and love. Thus it is written in the book of Psalms, *You anoint my head with oil*, (23:5), where by oil is manifestly meant spiritual oil, because it is said that God anoints with it, and, consequently, it can mean nothing but the communication of the divine mercy and love. It was for the same reason that oil was commanded to be so frequently used in the Jewish sacrifices, to denote that no sacrifice can be acceptable to the Deity but what proceeds from His own spirit of pure love, compassion, and mercy.

It is written, that *while the Bridegroom was a long time in coming, they all slumbered and slept*.

By the Bridegroom tarrying, we are to understand the delay in His appearing and full manifestation, until His children, or Church, are duly prepared for His reception. This delay is grounded in the wisdom of His divine order and providence, which requires that mankind should be tried and exercised in various ways, before they can be admitted to the high honour and happiness of eternal conjunction with their Divine Lord. For man, being naturally born in evil, cannot hope to be a partaker of the heavenly blessings to which he is invited, until his natural evils be in some degree removed; and this removal cannot be effected but by a variety of trials, and troubles, and the apparent absence of the heavenly Bridegroom: this apparent absence, therefore, in the process of regeneration, is what is here to be understood by the Bridegroom tarrying.

We find frequent mention made of slumbering and sleeping in the Sacred Scriptures; and by slumbering is always meant a natural state of the understanding in regard to the apprehension of truth; and by sleeping is meant a natural state of the will in regard to the perception of good. This, therefore, is what is here meant by slumbering and sleeping, to denote that both the wise and foolish virgins cherished doubts in their understandings respecting the bridegroom's coming, and were likewise sluggish in their affections on the same subject. This is a consequence of not admitting, in its fullness, the operation of spiritual good and spiritual truth from the Word of God, to raise them out of a natural state of thought and will. For every man is said, spiritually, to slumber and sleep, so long as he is under the dominion of mere natural thought and affection; as, on the other hand, he is said, spiritually, to awake, whenever he suffers the truth of God's Holy Word to raise him out of, and above, such a natural state of affection and thought.

By midnight, in the spiritual sense of the word, is understood the last state of the Church, when there is no longer in it any light of heavenly truth, because there is no love of heavenly good. Whenever this is the case, then presently comes morning, which is here signified by Bridegroom coming, because by the Bridegroom is understood the Lord, who is said to come when He reveals to His Church new truths, by opening the internal sense of His Holy Word. In the Sacred Scriptures, therefore, the coming of the Lord is frequently called morning.

The command, *Go you forth to meet Him*, signifies, as was said above, an exhortation to prepare for the reception of His holy love and wisdom, by which reception alone man is admitted to the high honour and happiness of becoming a pure bride and wife of the

heavenly Bridegroom and Husband.

*Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps,* by which words is meant, that all began to prepare themselves; for they who are without charity, believe they shall be accepted alike with those who have charity, since they suppose that faith alone is saving, not aware that there is no faith where there is no charity.

*And the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.* Hence, it appears, they were willing that charity should be communicated to their empty knowledge, or to their void faith, from others; but this is a thing-impossible, since the law, respecting- the possession of charity, requires that every man shall himself receive it from God, and this in the degree in which he removes from his heart and life the affections which are contrary to charity. This appears from the answer of the wise virgins on the occasion, who said, *Not so, lest there be not sufficient for us and for you: go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves;* by which words we are taught, that no one can be saved by the virtues of another, only so far as he endeavours to make those virtues his own, by incorporating them into his life through repentance and faith in the Incarnate God.

It is afterwards written, that *while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut,* by which words is signified and expressed, that the application of the foolish virgins was then preposterous and useless, because it was an application grounded in their fears rather than in the conviction of their own minds and consciences. For no man was ever known to be reformed from fear, which operates only on the external man, and not at all on the internal, to turn it towards the love of God and Heaven.

By *they that were ready* are meant, they who had joined charity to their faith, or the good of life to their knowledges; and by their entering in with the bridegroom into the marriage, is signified, that they were admitted into Heaven, because Heaven is Heaven from the conjunction of charity and faith, or, what is the same thing, from the conjunction of heavenly knowledge with the life of knowledge, on which account Heaven is compared to a marriage, and really is a marriage.

The door being shut, on this occasion, denotes that none else could enter but the wise virgins, that is to say, they who were in faith grounded in charity, or whose knowledge was united with the life of knowledge. For such is the case in regard to Heaven, that none are admitted there but such as are ready, or prepared, and all preparation for Heaven implies the conjunction of heavenly principles, such as love and wisdom, charity and faith, goodness and truth, speculation and practice, piety and the life of piety; therefore, where there is no such conjunction, there can be no admission into Heaven, in which case the door is said to be shut; not that the Lord shuts it, but that men shut it against themselves by their impenitence, unbelief, and want of application for the conjunction of the above heavenly principles.

But it is said, that *afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Thus they flattered themselves with the groundless hope of being admitted into Heaven by the divine mercy alone, though they were void of that charity, in and by which the divine mercy can alone operate. They trusted to be saved by faith alone, from which they supplicated the Divine Being, not aware that the supplication of faith alone, separate from the life of faith, which is charity and good works, is not heard by the Almighty, and does not penetrate into Heaven, because God and Heaven are moved by no prayers but those of

the penitent, who are desirous of uniting in themselves all the principles of Godlike and heavenly life.

We read, further, that *he answered and said, Verily I say to you, I know you not.* Jesus Christ is said not to know the wicked and the thoughtless, because there is nothing in their minds which is in agreement with His own. On the other hand, He is said to know the good and the faithful, because the principles of their lives are both derived from, and in accord with, the principles of His own divine love and wisdom. Accordingly, He says, of His true disciples, *I know my sheep, and am known of mine* (John 10:14), because His disciples, or His sheep, are formed after His own image and likeness, and thus partake of His holy spirit and life. When, therefore, He says to the foolish virgins, *I know you not*, it is the same thing as if He had said, *there is nothing in you which is in any agreement with My own divine love and wisdom, because you have received only the knowledge of Me and of My will in your understandings, but have not conjoined that knowledge with the love of Me and of My will in your hearts and lives.* The consequence is, that we cannot dwell together in the same kingdom, and you cannot be admitted to the heavenly marriage, inasmuch as my kingdom is a kingdom of love, of wisdom, and of use united, and the heavenly marriage is a conjunction of the same heavenly principles. *Depart from me, therefore, you that work iniquity.*

In the conclusion of the parable it is said, *Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man comes.* Watching is a term which applies to the mind of man, and not to his body; and the mind of man is said to watch when it keeps itself open to the light of heavenly truth, and when it thus applies itself to fulfil the duties of life, by acting, on all occasions, and in every employment, according to the life and spirit of the commandments of God, that is to say, according to justice and judgement, sincerity and uprightness. On the other hand, man is said not to watch, or to fall asleep, when he suffers his mind to be influenced by mere natural loves and their delusive persuasions, and thus separates himself from all the light and comfort of the guidance of the eternal truth.

The day and the hour of the Son of Man's coming denote the time, or state of man's acceptance with God, or the time and state of a perfect conjunction with Him, which is altogether unknown to man, wherefore he is commanded to watch.

We are taught, by this parable, that the folly of all follies is to possess knowledge without the life of knowledge, or faith without charity, or speculation without practice; and that the wisdom of all wisdom is, to conjoin knowledge with its life, faith with its charity, and speculation with its practice, since, where these principles are separated in the mind and life, there can be no admission to the heavenly marriage, or kingdom of God, but where they are conjoined, they never fail to introduce to that kingdom, or marriage, and all its joys.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MAN TRAVELLING INTO A FAR COUNTRY.

Matt. 25:14-30.

*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. After a long time the Lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them. And so he that had received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said to him, Well done, you good and faithful servant - you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His Lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed: and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have what is yours. His Lord answered and said to him, You wicked and lazy servant, you know that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered seed: you ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which has ten talents. For to every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

By the man is meant the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and by His travelling into a far country, His departure out of the world, and thus His apparent absence, or distance.

By His servants are meant, all who are in the world; and by calling and delivering to them His goods, is to be understood, His communicating to them the knowledges of truth and good from His Word, with the faculty of perceiving them.

It is said, that *to one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took His journey.*

By talent is to be understood faculty; and by five, two, and one, are meant the different applications of that faculty by different persons; for there is no inequality in God, and, therefore, He gives to all alike the facility of procuring to themselves eternal life by a right application of the knowledges of truth and good entrusted to their care. The difference, therefore, here spoken of, in respect to the number of talents, is intended to point out the difference in the use of them by men of different characters. Thus, they who greatly improve their talent by a right application of knowledges, are said to have five talents; they, again, who unite faith with charity, are said to have two talents, because the

number two signifies such conjunction; and, again, they who have faith alone, with.-out charity, are described as having only one talent. It is, therefore, said, that He gave to every man according to his several ability.

Taking His journey means the same as travelling into a far country, namely, the Lord's departure out of this world, and His apparent absence from His people, whilst they are only in the knowledge of truth and good, before they have gained full possession of those heavenly principles in their own minds.

It is said, that *he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made other five talents.*

By the same are here meant, the knowledges of truth and good, which are signified by talents; and by trading with the same is understood, the procuring to himself intelligence and wisdom by those knowledges. For the case herein is this, that all heavenly knowledges, by which man's salvation is effected, are first stored up in the memory, and, if he be a thoughtless and impenitent man, never applying those knowledges to the reformation of his life, they remain stored up in the memory only, without ever being exalted, as they were intended to be, to any higher degree of the man's life. On the contrary, if the man be of an opposite character, and applies the knowledges he has received in his memory to the reformation and regulation of his life, they are then exalted to a higher place in the man's mind, being admitted into his understanding and his will, where, they are no longer knowledges, but intelligence and wisdom; intelligence, so far as they are admitted into, and enlighten, the understanding; and wisdom, so far as they are admitted into the will, and produce therein the heavenly fruit of love to God and charity towards the neighbour.

By making other five talents is to be understood, the, immense increase and fruitfulness of truth or knowledge, when it comes to be applied to its proper end - the reformation and regeneration of the life - and is thus brought into conjunction with its divine source. For, in such case, the multiplication and fructification of truth in the human mind, is like that of a grain of corn (to which also it is compared in the Sacred Scriptures), when it is cast into good ground, which, every one knows, is immense, and exceeds all human expectation, so that the product from a single grain of corn might, in a succession of years, replenish the whole earth: yet this increase is not more wonderful nor more true, than the increase of the talents, here spoken of, when they are applied to the blessed purposes for which they are given. A similar increase is signified in the next verse, where it is written, that *likewise he that had received two he also gained other two.*

But it is said, that *he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his Lord's money.*

His going and digging in the earth means, his Application to mere external things, such as relate to worldly and selfish love; and his hiding his Lord's money means that he so buried the knowledges of heavenly truth and the faculty of using them, in those terrestrial and filthy loves, that he was no longer aware that he possessed any such faculty or such knowledges. Thus his Lord's money was hid both from his own eyes and from the eyes of others; from his own eyes, because he had lost sight of such possessions; and from the eyes of others, because *his light did not so shine before men, that they might see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven.*

It is next said, that *after a long time the Lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them.*

A long time expresses delay, until the period was fully arrived of the successful issue of the faithfulness of the wise servants, and of the unsuccessful issue of the unfaithfulness of the unprofitable servants; thus it denotes delay until all the servants were fully tried and proved, as to the ruling principles of their lives.

The Lord, when spoken of in regard to the servants, denotes the principle of heavenly good, in regard to the truths which administer to it, and by which it is to be rendered fruitful. For the end of all truths is, that they may be productive of heavenly good, and afterwards may be conjoined with that good, and thereby, with the Lord Himself. In this, therefore, consists the exploration of all truths, and thus of all those who are principled in truths, which exploration is here called reckoning. For if truths, or they who are principled in truths, are capable of admitting and of being conjoined with heavenly good, which is the love of God and neighbourly love, it is then a plain proof that the truths have been applied in trading according to the design of their Divine Source. On the contrary, if truths have not been so applied, it is then equally certain, that they have not been exercised in trading, according to the original intention of Him who save them.

We next read, that *he who had received five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord.*

By bringing the other five talents to his Lord, is to be understood, the humble and grateful acknowledgement that this increase and fruitfulness was not from himself, or his own exertions, alone, but from his Lord, and the communications of His mercy and truth.

By the Lord's saying to the servant, well done, is to be understood, Divine approbation communicated to the servant's mind, or conscience, which approbation is one and the same thing with the influence of the Divine mercy and truth, willingly and gratefully received; and he is called good and faithful servant, in regard to the two principles, the will and the understanding, in which those heavenly principles of the divine love and truth were admitted and rendered fruitful; the will being the receptacle of the divine mercy, or love, and the understanding being the receptacle of the divine truth, or wisdom.

The Lord further says, *You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.* These words denote a state of dominion over all evils, to which this good and faithful servant had now attained; for to be faithful over a few things is significative of his first state in the regeneration, when he was under the influence only of the knowledges of truth in his understanding, which state is expressed by faithfulness over a few things; because, whilst man continues to act from truth alone, not fully conjoined with heavenly good, there is little or no fruitfulness of heavenly principles in his mind and life, and, therefore, the things belonging to him are then called a few things. But to be made ruler over many things, is significative of a second state in the regeneration, when heavenly good begins to acquire the ascendancy, and, being conjoined with the knowledge of truth in the understanding, imparts to man sovereignty and dominion over all the lower principles of his mind and life, both good and evil, and this state is expressed by the Lord's words, *I will make you ruler over many things.*

The words, *Enter you into the joy of your Lord,* cannot be understood until it be known what is meant by the Lord's joy, and by entering into it. Now, the Lord's joy consists in seeing others happy in and from Himself, that is to say, by conjunction of life with



himself. To enter, then, into this joy, is to be made partaker of it; and, therefore, when it is said to the good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord, it was intended to give him an assurance, that he should now on be partaker of a happiness similar to that of God Himself, namely, the inconceivable happiness of seeing others happy, and of observing, at the same time, that their happiness is at once full and indestructible, by virtue of its conjunction with the Eternal and the Infinite.

It appears that he who had received two talents was in like manner admitted, on account of his faithfulness, to spiritual dominion and spiritual joy. But it is said, that when he came who had received the one talent, he said, *Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed; and I was afraid, and went and hid your fulfill: in, the earth; lo, there you have what is yours.* By this part of the parable, Jesus Christ meant to instruct us, that His precepts of love and charity always appear hard and severe to the thoughtless and impenitent, which, to the humble and pious Christian, are most easy, and, at the same time, most delightful, agreeably to those words of Jesus Christ, where He says, *My yoke is easy, and My harden is light.* The reason why it appears otherwise to the thoughtless and impenitent, is, because their wills, or love, are not engaged in the service of their heavenly Master, and where this is the case, all service must of necessity seem burdensome and grievous. For truth without love is the most severe tyrant and taskmaster of all others; as, on the other hand, when truth is received with its love, that is to say, with its delight, no service can be more sweet and alluring. This servant, therefore, who had received one talent, in other words, who was in faith without charity, or in the knowledge of the truth without its life and love, charges his Lord with reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not scattered seed, thus throwing the blame off himself, and fixing it upon his Lord, by endeavouring to prove that his own unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness were the results, not of any fault of his own, but of a defect in his Lord's bounty, and of an unreasonableness in his Lord's expectations.

From the man's saying, *I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth,* we are further instructed that fear and dread always accompany unfaithfulness, and are, besides, always attended with unfruitfulness; as, on the other hand, hope and consolation are the constant offspring of dutiful obedience. We learn, therefore, that we ought always to live and act from a principle of love towards God, derived from the mercy and benignity of his character, rather than from a principle of dread and slavish apprehension, grounded in a sense of His majesty and greatness.

The words, *Lo, there you have what is yours,* teach us that the most unfaithful servants are willing to make a compromise with God, even though they have nothing to present to Him but the truths of their own sad negligence. Thus the unfaithful servant here says to his Lord, *Lo, there you have what is yours,* as if he was fulfilling an act of justice by returning to his Lord what he had received from him; whereas it was, in reality, an act of injustice, because the talent which he returned was given him for the purpose of being increased, and, consequently, in not increasing it he proved himself unjust.

It follows, that *the Lord answered and said to him, You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered seed. You ought, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.* Every unprofitable servant is both wicked and lazy; wicked, because he remains in natural love, separate from spiritual love, whereby all his affections are turned away from God and Heaven; and lazy, because his understanding, in

such case, has no activity to contemplate on heavenly things, but only to employ itself in the lower cares and concerns of this world and the flesh. Moreover, this unprofitable servant was subject to condemnation, even upon his own principles, since, had he acted in conformity to the knowledge of his Lord, which he himself professes to have received, his conduct would have been more proper and justifiable, because then he would have put his Lord's money to the exchangers, so that his Lord at his coming would have received his own with usury. By which is meant, that by knowledge he would have acquired love and charity, and thus his talent would have been returned to his Lord with the usury, or increase, which it was intended to procure.

But it is said, *Take therefore the talent from him and give it to him that has ten talents. For to every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.* By the talent, as was said, are signified the knowledges of truth with which the unprofitable servant had been gifted, and by the command, therefore, to take away this talent, is signified the effect produced by the servant's unprofitableness, in depriving him of those knowledges. For such is the nature of all sin, that, opposing the eternal truth, it destroys in itself the knowledges of that truth, so as to make itself desolate of all heavenly light by plunging into the darkness which favours its own cravings.

The command, *Give it to him which has ten talents*, signifies the effect produced by a proper and profitable use of the knowledges of truth, which effect is, that they increase by use, and are the exclusive property of those who apply them to the purposes for which they are given to procure by it the good of heavenly love and charity, by applying it to the removal of all contrary loves, that so the supreme good may be exalted and operative in every principle both of mind and body. Lastly, we are instructed, as to the consequences resulting from the right and wrong application of the above inestimable talent committed to every one's care; that the right application leads to dominion over all the powers of evil and darkness, and, at the same time, to a blessed conjunction with Heaven and its God; whereas the wrong application leads to the deprivation of all heavenly knowledge, and, thus, to the grossest degree of spiritual darkness, and, finally, to an intestine hatred against all the goodness and truth of Heaven, thus to a miserable association with wicked spirits in the bottomless pit.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MAN WHO CAST SEED INTO THE GROUND, etc.

Mark. 4:26-29.

*And he said, So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*

The Kingdom of God is the government of divine love and wisdom in the minds and lives of angels and of men; for wherever such government prevails, there the Almighty rules as in His own kingdom, and, consequently, there is the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is like a man who casts seed into the ground, because the seed, here spoken of, is the Word of God; and the ground into which the seed is cast is the human understanding ; and when the Word of God is received and exalted in the human understanding, it introduces and establishes, by degrees, in the human mind and life the government of the Divine Love and Wisdom, which, as was said, is the Kingdom of God.

By sleeping and rising, according to a natural idea, is understood natural sleep, and natural awaking out of sleep; but, according to the spiritual idea, which is the idea here intended to be suggested, by sleeping is to be understood a state of natural affection and thought, whilst by rising is to be understood a state of spiritual affection and thought. *For* natural affection and thought, when compared with spiritual, is like sleep, or the state of a man in sleep, compared with awaking out of sleep, or with the state of a man who is so awakened; and hence, the Apostle, in calling man to a state of repentance and faith, which is a spiritual state of mind, uses this strong and striking figurative language, *Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.* Jesus Christ, therefore, would teach, by the above expressions, that spiritual sleep is as necessary for the soul, in the progress of its regeneration, till it becomes a Kingdom of God, as natural sleep is for the body; in other words, He would instruct us, that in the progress of regeneration there is a regular alternation of state, which is of such a nature that the regenerating person cannot always remain in a state of spiritual affection and thought, but must descend, at intervals, into natural affection and thought, it being the end of regeneration to unite the internal man with the external, and the external with the internal, mutually, which end cannot be accomplished but by successive sleeping and rising, according to the above idea, until at length the internal man is exalted to dominion above the external, or, what amounts to the same thing, until spiritual affection and thought gains the entire ascendancy and control over natural affection and thought.

The reason why the subject of spiritual sleep is little considered and understood seems to be this, that the generality of Christians separate their religion from the business and duties of common life, until thus separate the spiritual, or internal, man from the natural, or external, man, not aware that it is the design of God, and the end of religion, to join together those two men, by introducing a spiritual, or religious, principle from the internal mind, to govern and direct all the thoughts, word, and works of the external. They suppose, therefore, that before a man can be truly religious, he must quit all his

engagements in the world, and devote himself entirely to a life of piety and contemplation. Thus they would be always awake, according to the spiritual idea, and never asleep; in other words, they would be always in a spiritual state, and never in a natural state. But Jesus Christ, in this edifying parable, teaches a contrary lesson by instructing us that spiritual sleep is necessary, as well as spiritual awaking, or, to speak without a figure, that it is necessary for man to descend, at times, from his high contemplations and pious meditations, to attend to the common duties and business of life, that so he may live a life of uses and good offices amongst his fellow-men, as well as a life of piety and devotion to his God, this being the end of all the commandments and dispensations of God, to join spiritual and natural life, and thus heaven and earth, together in man, that so God may rule, and guide, and bless man, in every principle and degree of his life, from first to last, from inmost to outermost. Nature, therefore, is not to be annihilated by grace, I ml, rather to be controlled, amended, and blessed; thus the natural affections, natural thoughts, and natural delights, are not to be destroyed, but to be submitted, so as to be rendered instrumental, in their place and degree, in promoting the greater to the service and happiness of His creatures. This attention, therefore, to spiritual duties on the one hand, and to natural duties on the other, and to the conjunction of both, is what Jesus Christ principally meant to enforce, when He describes the man in the parable as alternately sleeping and rising.

The night and day, spoken of in this parable, are to be understood, according to a spiritual idea, as relating to the soul, or spirit, of man, and not to his body; and in agreement with this idea, by night is to be understood the natural life of man, before he becomes spiritual, and also every state of darkness through which he has to pass in the process of regeneration, until the natural life is entirely submitted to the spiritual. By day, again, according to the same idea, is to be understood the first dawning of spiritual life in man, or the first manifestation of the divine love and wisdom in his inner man, for light and consolation. For, as the natural day is an effect of the rising and appearing of the natural sun, to give the blessings of natural light and warmth to the creation of God, in like manner the spiritual day is a result of the rising and manifestation of the spiritual sun, or the Sun of Righteousness, to impart spiritual light and heat, which is the light of wisdom, and the consolation of love, to all those happy beings who open their eyes and their hearts to the reception of those blessed and eternal principles. Night and day, therefore, as here applied in the parable, are again expressive of the same alternations of state which were before signified by sleeping and rising.

By the seed, as was said above, is meant the Word of God, or, what amounts to the same thing the Eternal Truth, and by this seed springing is to be understood, its reception and operation in the understanding of man; and by its growing up is to be further understood, its reception and operation in the will of man. By both expressions united, then, is intended to be described the reception and operation of the Eternal Truth in every principle of the mind and life of man, since will and understanding properly constitute the whole of man, insomuch that, if the Eternal Truth is admitted into both those principles, and suffered to operate there, it never fails to take possession of every other faculty, until it renders man a blessed form and image of its own purity and power in all his affections, thoughts, words, and works. It is not enough, therefore, that the Divine Seed of the Word of God should spring up in the understanding of man, and make itself manifest there under the form of heavenly knowledge or science; but it must also grow up in the will, and there manifest itself in the spirit and power of heavenly love and charity, otherwise it takes but a partial possession of the human faculties, and can never form man entirely

after its own image and likeness. This, therefore, was the reason why the two distinct expressions of springing and growing up are here applied by the Divine Speaker.

The words which immediately follow, *he knows not how*, teach us that it is impossible for man to comprehend the several particular steps and stages in the process of his regeneration, or in the growth and fruitfulness of the Divine Seed of eternal life in his own bosom, since there is reason to believe, that they are like the hairs of his head, which cannot be numbered. Jesus Christ teaches the same lesson in another place, where, speaking of the Divine Operation, He says, *The wind blows where it lists, and you hearest the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit* (John 3:8). It is enough, therefore, for man to know, that if he admits the Eternal Truth into his understanding, and cherishes it in his will, or love, by rejecting from his heart and life the things which are in opposition to it, the Divine Seed will then, assuredly, spring and grow up, and, notwithstanding his ignorance of the particulars of its growth, will finally become that Tree of Life, of which it is written, *To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God* (Rev. 2:7).

By the earth is meant the Church, or men of the Church, who receive the seed of the Eternal Truth, and bring forth its fruits, as the earth receives the seeds of plants and vegetables, and brings forth their fruits. And by the earth bringing forth fruit is to be understood, that the members of the Church cherish the seed of eternal life in their understandings, until it operates upon their wills, and there produces the blessed fruit of love and charity, of love towards God, and charity towards man, from which are further derived the fruits of use and good service, manifested in the faithful discharge of the several duties, offices, and employments, to which every member of the Church is called for the general good. And by the earth bringing forth fruit of herself is further to be understood, not that she does it independently of Divine Aid, or by any power properly her own, for the members of the Church, who are here signified by the earth, are continually aware of the truth of what Jesus Christ taught them, when He said, *Without Me you can do nothing*; but that, under the full acknowledgement of her perpetual dependence on her Divine Lord for His merciful grace and assistance, she still sees the necessity of exerting herself, as of herself, to give saving effect to that grace and assistance. Thus she sees the necessity of searching out and combating her natural evils, as of herself, but still under the conviction, that she can only do so successfully whilst she looks up to her Redeeming Lord. In like manner she offers up her daily supplications, as of herself, and performs her daily works of charity, as of herself, yet, in everything confessing from her heart, that *it is God who works in her both to will and to do of His commandments*. The members of the Church, therefore, do not hang down their hands in the vain expectation that God will move them by His immediate, irresistible operation, to subdue evil, and to do good, for they are well aware that in such case they would be mere machines, and not those free and voluntary agents which God intended to make them. But they exert themselves, as if the power of exertion was entirely their own, and by this means they attain, finally, to perfect freedom, and, at the same time, to the most absolute dependence, whilst they think everything, and do everything, as if left to themselves, and yet are deeply sensible that all their power of thinking and acting is from God, and nothing at all from themselves.

The product of the Eternal Truth, or Word of God, in the mind and life of the devout receiver, is figuratively described by the product of a grain of corn, which consists

principally of these three distinct parts, the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. By the blade, therefore, is to be understood, the first manifestation of the Divine Truth in man's memory, where it appears under the form of science, or knowledge, and is stored up for future use, or for the production of the ear, which cannot otherwise be produced.

According to the same spiritual view, by the ear is to be understood the reception of the same divine truth in the understanding of man, and its operation there, which effect has place whenever man begins from his heart to love and delight in the truth, so as to exalt it above all other things, and to suffer it to control all his affections, thoughts, words, and works. And by the full corn in the ear, agreeably to the same idea, is to be understood, the birth and manifestation of heavenly love and charity in the will, which is love towards God, and love towards our neighbour, together with the operation of that love. Thus, these three natural terms, the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in their spiritual signification, involve all the states of man's regeneration, from the first insemination of the Eternal Truth in his memory and understanding, to its last product in the will, or love, until it changes its name and nature, and manifests itself in the blessed power and full operation of angelic love and charity, thus of angelic life and blessedness. In this last state it is called the full corn in the ear, because it is now filled with the Life of God, that is to say, with His Divine Love and Wisdom, thus with all fullness.

It is lastly added, that when the fruit is brought forth, *he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come*. We have already seen, what is spiritually meant by the fruit being brought forth, or (as perhaps it might be better rendered), being ripe.

By the sickle, according to the spiritual idea, is to be understood, the power of Divine Truth in its operation of exploring and separating all things in the Church, and in the members of the Church. For when this Divine Truth has been inseminated, and has brought forth its proper fruits, whether in the Church in general, or in the members of the Church in particular, it then assumes another office, signified here by the sickle, of exploration and separation of all things and principles which are contrary to its own nature. Thus, in the Church in general, the evil are separated from the good, whilst the good are raised into Heaven, and the evil cast down into hell; and so also in the members of the Church in particular, an eternal separation takes place between the principles of good, and the principles of evil, the former being exalted to everlasting conjunction with God, whilst the latter are removed and eternally associated with their like in the kingdom of darkness.

The concluding words of the parable, *because the harvest is come*, refer to the separation above referred to, and signified by the sickle, which separation always takes place whenever the Church in general, or a member of the Church in particular, attains to a full state of heavenly good, or to a full state of love and charity, signified by the full corn in the ear, because, whenever this state takes place, then the blessed powers of good and truth gain the ascendancy, so as to overcome and separate eternally from themselves the contrary infernal powers of what is evil and false. In the representative Church, therefore, this state was ordained to be kept holy, which solemnity was called the feast of harvest, consisting in the offering up of devout thanksgiving to the Almighty for His unspeakable mercies in accomplishing such a state. This spiritual harvest is also frequently spoken of by Jesus Christ, as where He says, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest* (Matt. 9:37, 38); and in another place, *Say you not there are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for*

*they are white already to harvest* (John 4:35).

From this parable we learn, in the first place, that the Kingdom of God is only to be opened and formed in man by the insemination of the Eternal Truth of God's Most Holy Word. We learn, further, that this truth cannot spring up and bear its fruits, but through a variety of alternate states on the part of man, according to which alternations he is sometimes in a natural state of life, and sometimes in a spiritual state, thus sometimes is sleeping, and sometimes is rising, or waking, while sometimes it is night, and sometimes day. We learn, also, that in all these states there is a growth of the heavenly seed, though man is entirely ignorant both of the manner and measure of its growth. We learn, again, that this growth is effected whilst man co-operates with it, and that in this co-operation he must act freely as of himself, yet in a full dependence on Divine Aid and Strength. Thus he must reject evil, and do good, and perform all his spiritual and natural duties in perfect freedom, as if left to himself, but yet under the full acknowledgement that all his power to reject evil, and to do good, is from God, and not at all from himself. Lastly, we learn, that the productions of the heavenly seed in the human mind are threefold; first, in the memory, where it appears in the form of science; secondly, in the understanding, where it is exalted as a heavenly power to guide and control the affections, the thoughts, the words, and works; and, lastly, in the will, where it operates in producing unfeigned love towards God, and charity towards man. When the eternal truth has attained to this state of growth, it then operates further, through the heavenly spirit of love in the will, in effecting an eternal separation between the principles of good and evil, so that the former are elevated into Heaven, and the latter are cast down into the deep. Let us resolve, therefore, through the Divine Grace, so to cherish in our minds and lives the Divine Seed of God's Most Holy Word, that it may attain in us its highest state of growth and fruitfulness, and, rescuing us from all evil, may finally fill us with all heavenly graces and virtues, and thus open in us its own heavenly kingdom, in which we may ever sing the angelic song, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.* Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND.

Luke 6:39-42.

*And he spoke a parable to them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why behold you the speck that is in your brother's eye, but perceive not the beam that is in your own eye. Either how can you say to your brother, Brother, let me pull out the speck that is in your eye, when you yourself behold not the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to pull out the speck that is in your brother's eye.*

The blind who lead the blind, denote, in general, all those who are without the understanding of truth, and who yet pretend to teach truth, and who, therefore, are called blind; whilst they, who listen to and receive their instruction are also called blind, because they do not admit into their minds the light of truth; but specifically, the words apply to the Scribes and Pharisees of old, who, being void of the understanding of truth, taught things contrary to truth, or things false, and thus misled their hearers, who are, therefore, called blind, as being alike destitute of the understanding of truth.

The signification of the ditch will perhaps best appear from the following passage in the Psalms: *Behold, he travails with iniquity, and has conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made* (Psalm 7:14, 15). For, from these words, it is plain, that iniquity, mischief, and falsehood, are called a pit, which the ungodly man digs, and the ditch into which he falls; and since those terms involve in them all that is opposite to the truth, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that whatsoever is opposite to the Eternal Truth, or to the revealed Word of God, in the ideas and imaginations of mankind, is the ditch above spoken of, into which all fall, who either pervert or deny the truth of God.

It is immediately added by Jesus Christ, *The disciple is not above his master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.* The connection between these words and the preceding ones is not discernible if we regard only the letter, but, according to the spirit, or their internal sense, the connection is plain and striking. For by the disciple is here meant one who receives instruction, and by his master one who gives instruction, consequently, the truth itself, since truth is properly the only instructor, whilst the teacher of truth is merely the instrument by which it is administered. When it is said, therefore, *The disciple is not above his master,* it was intended to teach the edifying and important lesson, that man, in receiving instruction, ought to submit to the light and guidance of the Eternal Truth, so as to suffer it to direct and control all his own thoughts, imaginations, and persuasions. It is, therefore, added, *Every one that is perfect shall be as his master,* which is the same thing as if it had been said, that all perfection consists in submitting to the guidance of the, Eternal Truth, by bringing every purpose, thought, and imagination of the natural mind into conformity with its light and purity.

The connection, therefore, between these words and the above parable, is manifest, since the parable speaks of the blind, or those who have no understanding of truth, whilst the words here added are intended to teach how that blindness may be removed, and the



understanding of truth be attained, namely, by yielding implicit obedience to the dictates of truth, or to the precepts of the Holy Word, so as to suffer them to be exalted to an uppermost place in the mind, and from that exaltation to exercise dominion over, and dispense light to, all the lower principles and persuasions of the human spirit.

It is further added, by Jesus Christ, *Why behold you the speck that is in your brother's eye, but perceive not the beam that is in your own eye?* These, and the following words, must be regarded as to their internal sense before they will appeal-connected with the foregoing, for, according to the internal sense of the words, Jesus Christ is here speaking of the eye of the mind, which is the understanding; and by the speck in this eye, He figures by the most apt similitude, the erroneous persuasions which have place in the understanding; whilst by the beam He meant, further, to express the principle of evil, in which those erroneous persuasions originate. For, by a beam is meant a piece of wood, or timber, and, by wood, or timber, when the expression occurs in the word of God, is always figured in a good sense, the principle of good, or the principle of heavenly love and charity, and, therefore, when applied in an opposite, or bad sense, it always denotes the principles of evil, or that principle which is opposite to heavenly love and charity.

The reasoning, therefore, of Jesus Christ, on this occasion, is to this effect, that man, in order to admit, and be qualified to teach, the Eternal Truth, ought to attend diligently to the source of evil and corrupt love in his own mind, so as to cast it out by a rigorous repentance, rather than to notice the erroneous persuasions which prevail in his understanding, since error can never be removed, only so far as its defiled source is discovered, with a sincere purpose to remove it. It is, therefore, said, *You hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to pull out the speck that is in your brother's eye*, to denote that, when evil is repented of and forsaken, then the light of truth presently begins to shine bright in the understanding, to the correction and removal of all erroneous persuasions and imaginations whatsoever. The connection, therefore, between these words and the parable is again manifest, since, as the parable relates to the want of the understanding of truth, and to the terrible effects of that deprivation, so these words teach, again, how that understanding may be restored, namely, by the spirit of sincere repentance in exploring and rejecting all the principles of evil in the will.

We learn, from this parable, that there is such a thing as spiritual blindness, as well as natural blindness, and that spiritual blindness consists in the want of the understanding of truth, or of the revealed wisdom of the Most High, since nothing can properly be called truth but that wisdom. We learn, further, that they who teach, and they who are taught, are alike spiritually blind, if the understanding of truth be wanting. Again, we learn what is the terrible consequence of such spiritual blindness, because, sooner or later, it never fails to plunge its unhappy subjects into a ditch; in other words, into the defiled miserable abode of all false and mistaken persuasions, which being in opposition to the Eternal Truth, exclude for ever its blessed light and comfort. Lastly, we are taught, by the application of this parable, that the only effectual method of acquiring the understanding of truth, is to submit to its authority, so as to bring all the principles of the mind and life into obedience to its dictates, this being the true source and ground of all human perfection; and that, with this view, man ought to regard in himself the principle of evil in his will, more than of error in his understanding, and, accordingly, to labour by sincere repentance to remove the former, as the most effectual method of securing the removal of the latter.

Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, through the Divine grace and mercy, to endeavour to guard against the terrible mischief of spiritual blindness, and, with this view, to attend well to our daily conduct, until all our purposes, thoughts, words, and works are brought into conformity with the Eternal Truth. Let us further resolve to watch well against all the motions of evil in the will, arising; either from an inordinate self-love, or love of the world, that so, having purified our hearts from till defiled affections, we may be in a better state to discern the speck that is in our brother's eye, and so to pull it out. Thus may *we* hope, through the Divine blessing, no longer to be of the number of the blind leaders of the blind, who both fall into the ditch, but rather to be of the happy number of those of whom it is written, *Blessed are your eyes for they see;* and again, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Amen,

# THE PARABLE

OF

## A CERTAIN CREDITOR WHICH HAD TWO DEBTORS.

Luke 7:41-43.

*There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said to him, You have rightly judged.*

By the creditor is to be understood, the Almighty Father and Governor of the Universe; and by his debtors, the whole human race who have received, and continually receive, from His bounty the all of their life, its faculties, and its enjoyments.

These debtors are called two debtors, in order to distinguish them into the two classes afterwards, mentioned, and described in these words: *The one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty.*

By the one who owed five hundred pence, is to be understood, that class of mankind who have received much at the hands of their Heavenly Father; and by him who owed fifty pence, is to be understood, that class who have received something, but not to the same amount with the other class.

It is to be observed, that this inequality does not originate in the Almighty, but in the use which the two classes of men, above spoken of, make of His gifts, whilst some improve them to a greater amount than others, agreeably to what is written in another parable, in which mention is made of giving to one servant ten pounds, to another five, and to another one; where the unequal distribution of the pounds is to be attributed to the unequal use which the several servants made of their respective talents.

The debt in general, as was above observed, which all mankind alike owe to their Heavenly Father, is the constant communication of life and all its enjoyments. But the life of man, it is well known, is of several orders and degrees; being first corporeal, then sensual, then natural, then rational, and, in case the man himself labours to attain it, spiritual and celestial. The life of man, therefore, which is every instant communicated from the Father of his being, is capable of continual elevation, until it rises and returns to its Divine Giver; and until again it descends from the Divine Giver, and manifests itself in all the works of a good and holy life. Though every man, therefore, receives from God the blessed gift of life with its enjoyments, and is indebted to God every instant for the continuance, support, and preservation of that gift; yet it does not hence follow, that every man turns the gift to all that advantage which was designed by the Giver, since experience teaches, that some men remain in a merely natural state of life, notwithstanding the faculty they possess of elevating it to a higher state. Hence, then, may be discovered the ground of the distinction, made in the parable, between the debtor who *owed five hundred pence*, and him who owed only *fifty*; inasmuch as the debt of five hundred pence implies that the gift of life had been improved according to the designs of the Giver, and thus had yielded much increase; whereas the debt of fifty pence implies that the gift had not been so much improved, and, consequently, had yielded less increase.

It is written of these two debtors, that *when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave*

*them both.*

By having nothing to pay is to be understood, the general condition of all mankind, which is such, that they have nothing of their own, by which they can make any suitable return for the immense gifts bestowed on them by their heavenly Father. For all the return they can possibly make, on this occasion, is the humble and grateful acknowledgement of the divine bounty, which has heaped on them so many valuable gifts; and since they cannot make even this acknowledgement without the aid of the Divine Giver, therefore, in making this return, they give nothing of their own, and only increase the debt which they owe to their Benefactor.

The expression, *he frankly forgave them both*, involves in it all the depths of the divine mercy and disinterested benevolence of the Father of Mercies, which is of such a nature, that He is ever disposed to forgive, or to remit, the immense debt owing to Him from His creatures, whenever He sees them humble and grateful enough to acknowledge it. Accordingly, in the divine prayer, which He Himself has been pleased to teach for the benefit of His children, it is written, *Forgive [or remit to] us our debts, as we forgive [or remit to] our debtors*; in which words is contained and expressed the single condition of obtaining from the Almighty the forgiveness, or remission, of the debt owing to Him from all His creatures; which condition is simply this, that His creatures should acknowledge gratefully, not only how much they are indebted to their Heavenly Father, but likewise how much they owe to their fellow-men for all the comforts which they enjoy.

It is remarkable that, in the account of this parable, Jesus Christ Himself does not announce the lesson which He intended should be deduced from it, but only asks the significant question, *Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?*

The only assignable reason for His conduct on this occasion appears to be this, that He thought it best to appeal to the common sense and reason of mankind in a case so plain and self-evident, being fully assured that the answer to His question would be according to the tenor of that which was afterwards given by Simon, who answered and said, *I suppose that he to whom He forgave most*. Thus, in agreement with the testimony of the common sense and reason of mankind, the blessed Jesus would establish the validity of this great truth, that the more man is made sensible in his own mind of the immense debt which he owes to his Heavenly Father, the more he will be disposed to regard that Father, from a principle of reciprocal love and affection; this being the great end and design of all the blessings bestowed on mankind from above, to excite a grateful acknowledgement, and in that gratitude to enkindle a flame of devout regard, which may incline the humble debtor to love Him, who is essential love, and who communicates His favours for no other purpose than to impart that love.

Jesus Christ, we find, Himself makes the application of the above parable in these remarkable words, where it is said, that *He turned to the woman, and said to Simon, See you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet; but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You gave me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil you did not anoint; but this woman has anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say to you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.*

By the woman, here spoken of, is figured and represented the Church, as to the affection of truth and good, which constitutes the Church; and by the several acts which this

woman performed on the feet of the Redeemer, as washing, wiping, kissing, and anointing, are further figured and described the genuine offices and operations of that affection.

By washing the Redeemer's feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of the head, is denoted the purification of the natural principle, which is two-fold: first, by truth, which is signified by washing; and, secondly, by the good of truth, signified by wiping; which latter operation is performed by the hairs of the head, as the former is performed by tears; because, by tears is represented an order of interior truth, as by the hairs of the head is represented a similar order of interior good of truth. By kissing, again, is figured conjunction with the Lord's natural principle of His Divine Humanity, by the affection of truth, as by anointing is figured the same conjunction by the affection of good. Thus, the four acts of washing, of wiping, of kissing, and of anointing the feet of the Great Redeemer, are figurative of the whole process of the Church's reformation and regeneration, which consists in purification from all evil, and final conjunction with the divine humanly of Jesus Christ in the affection of heavenly truth and good. It accordingly follows, in this history, *Wherefore I say to you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.* For by loving much is to be understood, a devout and sincere regard to the Divine Being and His Holy Law; and wherever this love prevails, there sin, let it be ever so multiplied, must of necessity be forgiven, or remitted, since a pure love and sin can never abide together in the same dwelling; and, therefore, if a pure disinterested love be exalted to preeminence in the human mind, every kind and degree of sin must, sooner or later, be expelled from that mind. For the same reason, *to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little;* because, by little being forgiven is implied, that the immense debt, owing to the great Creator, has never been explored and acknowledged; and the consequence must of necessity be, in such case, that there will be little love, since, as was above observed, the measure of every man's love to his Heavenly Father will depend altogether upon the measure he takes of the benefits and blessings which he has received from that Father.

From this parable we learn, in the first place, that the Divine Being, the Creator and Preserver of all other beings, is the universal Creditor, whilst all His creatures, in one degree or other, are His debtors. We learn, further, that these debtors are of two classes—one owing five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and that these classes are determined by the estimate which every man makes of the mercies he has received from his bountiful and Divine Parent. We learn, still further, that it is impossible for man to pay the above debt, but by the humble and grateful acknowledgement of his Heavenly Father's benevolence, and that when this acknowledgement is made, the debt is in the same proportion forgiven, or remitted. Lastly, we learn that the degree of man's love, or regard, to his Divine Benefactor, will always depend on the degree in which he is affected by the multiplied and valuable gifts which he has received from Him; insomuch, that he who is little affected will love little, whilst he who is much affected will love much.

Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, to make it the principal business and concern of our lives, to form a just estimate of the immense debt which we owe to our God and Saviour, taking into the account not only what He has done, and is continually doing, as to the preservation and blessing of our bodily life, but, also, what is of infinitely more importance, all that He has done, and is continually doing for the preservation and blessing of our spiritual life, as to all its faculties, operations, and enjoyments. Let us resolve, further, to endeavour to form in ourselves the blessed habit of a grateful

acknowledgement of this immense debt, under a sensible conviction, that according to such acknowledgement will be the exact measure of our love and regard to the great Author of our being. Thus may we humbly hope no longer to imitate the Pharisee, mentioned in this history, who suspected a want of judgement and discernment in his Saviour God, but rather to follow the example of the woman, of whom it is written, as an everlasting memorial of pious affection, that she washed her Saviour's feet with her tears, wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed, and anointed them. For thus may we hope, like this woman, to enter upon the great work of purification, by which, finally, we may be admitted to the inconceivable and eternal happiness of a blessed conjunction with our God and Saviour, through His Divine Humanity, and may thus be greeted with the consolatory language, *her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.* Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Luke 10:30-36.

*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatsoever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, think you, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves?*

Jesus Christ, in this parable, describes the offices and exercises of charity in a two-fold sense; first, as they regard the body; and, secondly, as they regard the mind. The first of these offices and exercises is described in the letter, or history, of this parable, and the second in the spirit, or spiritual sense, contained in that letter, or history. Thus he speaks at once for the use of men and of angels; of men, by recommending works of charity done to the body, and of angels and angelic men, by recommending at the same time works of charity done to the immortal soul, or spirit. According to this latter kind, or description, of charity, by *a certain man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho*, are to be understood all those of the church, represented by Jerusalem, who are desirous of acquiring the knowledges of the eternal truth, for the purpose of acquiring purity of life, and thus an acquaintance with the Eternal Truth itself; for Jericho was a city representative of those knowledges, being on the other side of Jordan from the land of Canaan, and thus figurative of what is introductory to the land of Canaan, or to Heaven, which was represented by that land, consequently, figurative of all the heavenly knowledges of truth and good, because these are the only introductory principles to the true Canaan.

According to the spiritual interpretation of this parable, by thieves are to be understood spiritual thieves, or such as endeavour to deprive man of his spiritual property, that is to say, of the heavenly truths which he has admitted into his understanding, and of the heavenly good which he has received into his will. By falling among these thieves, therefore, is to be understood, that they who are in the pursuit of heavenly knowledges are exposed to the danger of being deprived of those knowledges by those of the perverse church, who are in those knowledges, but not in a life according to them. They are, therefore, said to be stripped of their clothing, because clothing has relation to the truths which a man has imbibed in his understanding. And they are said also to be wounded, because spiritual wounding has relation to the evils and false principles of life with which man is infested when he is deprived of the knowledges of the Eternal Truth. And, lastly, they are said to be left half dead, because to be half dead denotes the almost total extinction of spiritual life, in consequence of such evil and false persuasions.

It is said, that *by chance there came down a certain Priest that way, and when he saw*

*him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on, and passed by on the other side.* By the Priest and the Levite, here spoken of, are to be understood those of the perverted Church who ought to have been principled in heavenly love and charity, but were not so. By the Priest are represented those who ought to have been principled in heavenly love, that is to say, in love to the Lord, because this is the principal love which prevails in heaven, and was represented under the old law by the office of Priests. But by the Levite were represented those who ought to have been principled in the life of charity, because the tribe of Levi was representative of that principle, having its name from Levi, which signifies adhesion, and is thus figurative of the life of charity. By their passing by, therefore, on the other side, is to be understood that they had neither heavenly love nor charity, and, thus, that they were in no disposition either to heal the spiritual wounds, or cover the spiritual nakedness of him who fell among thieves.

But it is written, that *a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatsoever you spend more, when I come again I will repay you.*

The Samaritans were regarded by the Jews as Gentiles, and, therefore, they represented all those who are in simple natural good, but as yet uninstructed in the doctrines of faith, or truth, that is to say, in the doctrines of the Church, and yet have a desire to be instructed. It is, therefore, said, as *he journeyed*, because journeying, according to the spiritual idea, denotes instruction in truth, which is to conduct to the good of heavenly life. Every man, therefore, is considered as a pilgrim, or journeyer, here on earth, so long as he is under the leading of truth, but as soon as ever he attains, by that leading, to a state of heavenly good, which is the good of love and charity, he is then said to be at rest, or to be arrived at the end of his journey.

By the expression, *he came where he was*, is denoted, that he came into the same state with the man who had fallen among thieves; in other words, that he made the man's case his own, regarding him as a brother, and, therefore, it is added, that *when he saw him, he had compassion on him*; by which is signified, that he regarded the man with brotherly love and tenderness, and this in consequence of placing himself in the man's situation, and thinking that he ought to do to others as he would have others do to him.

All the expressions which immediately follow represent the acts and offices of charity, especially as applied in the instruction of the ignorant, and in rescuing them from the mischiefs of ignorance and of evil. The words, therefore, *he went to him*, denote willing descent and application to spiritual distress, with a view to its relief: by binding up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, is represented instruction in heavenly good and heavenly truth, and the consequent removal of evil and of error; for by wounds, as was shown above, are to be understood the effects of evil and error in injuring the spiritual constitution of man; and by oil and wine are signified and represented heavenly good and heavenly truth, both of which are necessary for the cure of spiritual wounds: by setting him on his own beast is signified, that he exalted the man to a state of intellectual thought, such thought being considered as a beast of burden, for the purposes of bearing, supporting, and carrying the higher or interior principles of spiritual life, which are those of heavenly love and charity. It is accordingly written in the Prophet, *I will cause you to*



*ride upon the high places of the earth* (Isaiah 58:14); where riding on the high places of the earth manifestly denotes a state of elevated understanding, which, by virtue of its connection with the Supreme Good, is enabled to raise itself above all the things of this world, however high and eminent they may appear. By bringing him to an inn, and taking care of him, is further denoted an additional exercise of charity, in providing for the man's spiritual accommodation, comfort, and refreshment. For by an inn is manifestly signified, according to its spiritual idea, a state of such spiritual accommodation, comfort, and refreshment, corresponding with that which is administered to the body in its journeying, by the convenience of a natural inn.

By *the next day* is to be understood a new state, when the man was to be left apparently to himself, to profit by the instructions, and the comforts which he had already received, and, therefore, it is said, that in this case the Samaritan departed from him. For such is the state with man, during the progress of his regeneration, that he first receives instruction, support, and comfort from another, to the intent that he may make them his own, by forming his life accordingly. On this occasion, therefore, he is apparently left to himself, to make the most of the blessings he has received, since without such appearance those blessings could not be appropriated to him. Nevertheless, that he is not really left to himself, but only apparently, is evident from what is further said in the parable, that the Samaritan, when he departed, *took out twopence, gave them to the host, and said to him, take care of him, and whatsoever you spend more, when I come again I will repay you*, for by taking out twopence, and giving to the host, and saying to him, take care of him, is denoted a continuation of the offices of charity, but in a new state; by taking out two pence is denoted the communication of truth, for all money, whether talents, pounds, or pence, is figurative of the eternal truth, since, as money is serviceable in procuring the necessaries of natural life, truth and its knowledges are serviceable in procuring the necessaries of spiritual life: and by giving to the host, and saying take care of him, is denoted the communication of good, for host, in this case, is not to be understood as a person, and thus as a distinct being from the Samaritan, but as principle, and as a principle also similar to that represented by the Samaritan, but in a new state, or the state in which the man was apparently left to himself. Lastly, by saying, *whatsoever you spend more, when I come again I will repay you*, is to be understood, that all truth applied to the purposes of a good life, by the rejection of evil, is finally converted into good, which is here signified by the repayment. For such is the case, so long as man is under the leading of truth, that, during that leading, good seems to be absent; but when this leading is accomplished by the removal of man's natural evils, through combat against them, then presently heavenly good is made manifest, and is the glad repayment, or recompense, for the truth, which has now completed its office by conducting man to the proper end of all truth, which is conjunction with the Almighty in the eternal good of love, of charity, and their operation.

From the letter, or history, of this parable, we are instructed in the duty of regarding every man as a brother, and, accordingly, of relieving all his bodily wants to the utmost of our power, uninfluenced by any partial consideration of situation and of circumstance, respecting either his religion or the country to which he belongs. And, from the spiritual sense of this parable, we are further taught the important duty of spiritual charity, which consists in relieving the spiritual wants and necessities of others, by instructing them in the truth, and especially by conducting them to an eternal good. We are taught, further, from the example of the Priest and Levite, to take heed to ourselves, lest at any time we pervert

the principles of religion in which we have been educated, by not cherishing those principles of heavenly love and charity which are the great ends of all religion, and without which no forms, ceremonies, or professions of religion whatever can possibly confer any benefit or blessing on man. Lastly, we are instructed by this parable, that true charity is incessant in its operation, and employs all possible instruments to accomplish its own purposes, regarding only the eternal end which it ever has in view, and which is simply this, to endeavour on all occasions, and under all circumstances, to make men wise, good, and happy.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE FRIEND VISITED AT MIDNIGHT.

Luke 11:5-9.

*And he said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give you. I say to you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his need he will rise and give him as many as he needs. And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*

By the first friend, here mentioned, is to be understood the Almighty and Merciful father of the universe, as to the good of His love, thus distinguished from the second friend spoken of, who is said to be in his journey, and who, therefore, represents the same Almighty Father, as to the truth of His wisdom, since journeying is always applied to truth, inasmuch as every man under the leading of truth, is regarded as a traveller, or sojourner, truth being the way, or the road, which conducts man to heavenly good.

Midnight denotes a state of ignorance, which precedes the knowledge of the eternal truth, and in which the first desire is kindled to attain the knowledge of that truth. For man is naturally born in ignorance, but still with the faculty from God of receiving and comprehending the eternal truth. Whenever, therefore, the affection for this truth is excited, and begins to operate in his mind from a genuine desire of attaining the truth, he is then said to go to his heavenly Friend at midnight.

It is said that he supplicates his friend to lend him three loaves. By the three loaves are to be understood all the principles of heavenly food and nourishment, necessary for the formation and support of heavenly life, which the natural man now begins to feel the want of; and by lending these three loaves is to be understood, that under the first reception of the divine love and wisdom, which are the food and nourishment here spoken of, these heavenly principles are regarded as borrowed gifts, because not yet fully incorporated into the life. For such is the nature of the first reception, for instance, of heavenly knowledge, that like the axe of the son of the prophet (2 Kings 6:5), which is the exact figure and representative of such knowledge, it is said to be borrowed, this being the case with all truth and its knowledge, until a man sees it by a clear light in his own mind to be truth. For every man, at first, receives truth on the authority of others, and confirms it by that authority; but, in proportion as he forms his life in agreement with it, he then sees the truth by its own radiant Sight, and thus confirms it in his mind by its own divine authority, in which case the truth and its knowledge are no longer to be regarded as a loan, or borrowed, but as his own property, because incorporated into his life's love. We have already seen, what is to be understood by the second friend, when he is said to be in his journey. We have now to consider what is meant by this second friend coming to the man who makes the supplication.

By the second friend then, being understood the Almighty Father of the universe, under the character of His Divine Truth; in this character He makes His first approach to man, in

order to gain admission into his heart and life, and thus to dwell with him eternally, on which occasion He is here said to come. Thus God makes his first approach to man by and in His Holy Word, because His Holy Word is the fullness of His Divine Truth, united with His Divine Good; and in proportion as man admits this Holy Word into his understanding, and forms it into his life, in the same proportion God is said to come to him, being for ever present and one with His Holy Word, and this in such a manner, that whoever receives His Holy Word receives Him, agreeably to those words of Jesus Christ to His disciples, *He that receives you receives Me, and He that receives Me receives Him that sent Me* (Matt. 10:40).

But it is added, *I have nothing to set before him*. These words were intended to describe the effect of the reception of the Eternal Truth, in teaching man that he has nothing of his own by which he can satisfy its requirement; thus teaching, further, that, of himself, he has no love either to God or towards men, such love being that which the Eternal Truth requires, and with which alone it can be satisfied. It is to be understood, therefore, that the Eternal Truth produces a double effect in the mind of him who admits it, namely, first, by teaching him his own wants, and that, in himself, there is nothing either of goodness or of truth which can render him acceptable to his Heavenly Father; and, secondly, by directing him to that Heavenly Father as the only divine source from which he can hope to receive those heavenly and saving principles.

It follows next in the parable, that *He from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give you*. These expressions, which seem to indicate an unwillingness or reluctance, on the part of the Almighty, to grant the supplication here presented to Him, are spoken in regard to the appearances, as they arise in the mind of the natural man, when he is first awakened by the reception of the Divine Truth, to discover what he is, in himself, and how, naturally, he has nothing in himself, either of saving good or saving truth. For, in this case, he is led to imagine that his needs are troublesome to the Divine Being; he fancies, too, that the door of communication is so shut between him and his Heavenly Father, that no supplication on his part can open it; and, lastly, he conceives that the Almighty is so blessed in Himself, and in His own Heaven, as to be insensible to the wants of His children on earth, and thus to be unmoved by their entreaties.

The expression, *He from within*, as applied to our Heavenly Father, was designed to teach this very important lesson, that our Heavenly Father, has His abode within all other things, or creatures, thus, that he is the inmost principle of all life, consequently, the inmost good, the inmost truth, and the inmost power, according to which idea He is called, in the Sacred Scriptures, the Highest, or Most High, because what is high, in its spiritual sense and interpretation, means what is within, and, consequently, what is highest means what is inmost.

It is plain that the words, *trouble me not*, are spoken according to appearance only; because it is not really true, in any one instance, that God ever thinks it a trouble to listen to the entreaties of His children: on the contrary, such is His divine love towards all His creatures, that nothing gives Him greater joy than to hear their supplications, and grant all their petitions. The natural man, however, judging from the state of his own mind, cannot possibly have any apprehension of this disposition of his God, and, therefore, he concludes that his needs give trouble to his Heavenly Father, in like manner as repeated need is apt to give trouble to men here below.

With regard to the door which is here mentioned, and which is said, on this occasion, to

be shut, we may observe, that there are in every human mind what may properly be called two doors, because a door, properly considered, is only a medium of communication. Thus, there is one door in every human mind which opens towards God and Heaven, because in every human mind there is a faculty of communication with God and Heaven. Again, there is another door which opens towards the kingdom of darkness, because in every human mind there is also a faculty of communication with that kingdom. By the door, therefore, in the present instance, being shut, is to be understood, that the natural man, on his first application to his Heavenly Father for divine grace and mercy, is not sensible of the communication being open, nor can he be made sensible of it, until, by repeated application, the door is opened, and he is thus led out of appearance into reality; which reality teaches that the door is never shut, only so far as man shuts it, either by his unwillingness to have it opened, or by his ignorance as to the manner of opening it. That a door is thus to be understood according to a spiritual idea, is evident from Jesus Christ calling himself the Door, by which is manifest, that He meant to describe Himself, as to His Divine Humanity, as the grand medium of communication between man and the Supreme Divinity.

The expression, *My children are with me in bed*, has relation to the repose of the angelic kingdom, and of all those who are honoured by the sacred appellation of God's children. Thus it is intended to express the appearance that such repose would be disturbed by the need of supplication.

It is added, further, *I cannot rise and give you*. The reason why it is here said, I cannot rise, when it might have been sufficient to say, I cannot give you is, that rising, in this case, as applied to the Almighty, is intended to express the elevation of Him, and of the principles of His life, in the human mind, since rising can never be predicted of the Almighty in any other sense than this. For God, so far as concerns himself alone, can never be said either to ascend or descend, and, therefore, whenever, either ascent or descent is applied to Him, the term must of necessity be intended to express only the state of His reception in the minds of His people. Thus, He is said to ascend, when He is exalted in the affections and thoughts of men as the Supreme Good and the Supreme Truth, as, on the other hand, He is said to descend and be degraded, when other things are exalted above Himself in the hearts and understandings of His creatures. This, therefore, is the reason why it is said, I cannot rise and give you, since God, there is every cause to believe, cannot give, or communicate His favours, graces, and blessings, until He arises; in other words, until he is exalted in the human mind as the Supreme Good and Supreme Truth. It is accordingly written, in the 68th Psalm, *Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered*, to instruct us, in like manner, that God cannot disperse the evils of man's heart, or the spirits of darkness connected with those evils, which are man's only real enemies, until He is suffered to arise in the power of His divine love and wisdom, and thus to be exalted as man's best Friend, Benefactor, and Protector. The expression, therefore, is again repeated twice in the following verse, where it is said, *Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his Friend, yet because of his need he will rise and give him as many as he needs*.

God, as a Friend, is disposed to communicate to mankind all his most precious gifts of love, wisdom, peace, protection, and blessedness, and out of His divine love is ever most eager and desirous to impart these gifts even to the most sinful of His creatures. But this desire on the part of God is not, of itself alone, sufficient for the communication and reception of those gifts, since before they can be communicated and received, it is

necessary that man, on his part, should be desirous to receive them, and from that desire, should apply to the Divine Giver to impart them. For without such a reciprocal desire on man's part, the gifts, if bestowed, would not be blessings, because they would not be acknowledged humbly and gratefully to be the bounty of a divine, unmerited mercy, and until man is in the disposition to make this acknowledgement, he would only pervert the most heavenly gifts to his misery and destruction, by separating them from their Divine Giver. For such is the nature of every good which proceeds from God, that it is instantly turned into an evil in that defiled mind, which is not disposed willingly and cheerfully, and thankfully to confess its Divine Source, and to rejoice in such confession. God accordingly waits for man's need before He dispenses His gifts, well aware that if there be no need arising from a humble and penitent desire in the heart of the supplicant, the gift, if dispensed, would be perverted and abused, and thus rendered a mischief instead of a blessing. It is, therefore, written of the wicked, that *The things which should have been for their wealth, are to them an occasion of falling.*

The parable continues, *He will rise and give him as many as he needs.* When man unites his desire with the desire of God, he then finds, not only that all things are possible for him, but that he comes into possession of universal property, so as to be enabled to say, with his Redeemer, according to his measure, *Father, all mine are Yours, and Yours are mine.* For such is the nature of the Divine Mercy, that, being willing to communicate to others all that it has, it waits only for the same will to be excited in others, that they may be as much disposed to receive as the Almighty is to give; in which case man comes into the possession of every possible good, and finds those words of his Saviour verified, *It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.* By as many as he needs, therefore, is to be understood, enough, or all-sufficiency, agreeably to the divine promise, here it is written, *He will fulfil [or, fillfull,] the desire of them that fear Him;* and, again, *He that overcomes shall inherit all things.* And thus is verified what is written in the verse which presently follows this parable, *Every one that asks re-ceiveeth: and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.*

The general instruction intended to be taught in this parable is, that the Almighty does not dispense His gifts according to the measure of His mercy only, but according to that of the desire of His children to receive His gifts, since it is impossible they can be received to any saving purpose without such a desire. We are, therefore, further instructed, that it is the will and intention of the Almighty first to beget and excite in his children the desire of an Eternal Good, because that desire is from Himself, and in whatsoever mind it is truly operative, it never fails, sooner or later, to secure the desired good, because God Himself is in it, and wherever God is, there must of necessity be also all possible good of love, of wisdom, of power, protection, and blessedness. Thus need on the part of man, being derived from an infinite mercy on the part of God, and connecting itself with that mercy, is sure to introduce the devout supplicant to the possession of all that he needs, to the removal of all his wants, and to the satisfying of every desire of bliss imparted to him by his Heavenly Father.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE RICH MAN WHOSE GROUND BROUGHT FORTH PLENTIFULLY.

Luke 12:16-22.

*And He spoke a parable to them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to store my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down, my barns, and build greater; and there will I store all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, You fool, this night, your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said to His disciples, Therefore I say to you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on.*

According to the letter of this parable, by ground is to be understood ground, and by a rich man one who abounds in worldly property; and in agreement with this sense, of the words, the Lord condemns the spirit of worldly covetousness. But, according to the spiritual sense of the parable, by *ground* is not to be understood ground, but the human mind, which is as ground intended for the reception of heavenly seeds, or truths; and by *a certain rich man* is to be understood one whose understanding abounds in the knowledge of those truths, agreeably to which sense his ground is said to bring forth plentifully.

By the expression, *he thought within himself, saying*, is meant interior reflection and consideration, which is a species of internal speech, and the source from whence all external speech is derived. Interior thought, therefore, is the most real speech, which, though not heard by men on earth, is plainly heard, and fully understood, by the Lord and His holy angels.

According to the letter, the purpose of this internal speech in the present instance has reference to the man's want of room where to store his worldly fruits; but, according to the spirit, it has reference to the man's contracted understanding, which was incapable of comprehending and containing all the appearances of good manifested in his will. For the understanding of man is a kind of repository, in which all the apparent goods and delights of the will are stored up for use and enjoyment. In proportion, therefore, to the fruitfulness of the will, in its apparent goods and delights, is the desire of man to extend the limits of his understanding, by virtue whereof those goods and delights may be fully comprehended, and thus become at once both more sensible and more permanent.

It is added in the next verse, that *he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I store all my fruits and my goods.*

Saying, in the first instance, has reference, as we have seen, to thought in the man's understanding; but in the second instance, it has reference to purpose in the man's will, originating in that thought, so that the Lord would teach us, by this mode of expression, of what vast importance our thoughts are, and how they are ever fructifying either in good or evil, since a good thought is always giving birth to a good purpose; whilst an evil thought

is, in like manner, ever productive of an evil purpose.

This same mode of expression occurs in the parable of the unjust steward, who, when accused of wasting his master's goods, first said within himself, What shall I do? And then, presently, replies to himself, I am resolved what to do; where it is evident that the question, What shall I do? has reference to the man's thought in his understanding; whilst the answer, I am resolved what to do, has reference to the purpose begotten by such thought in the man's will.

The words, *I will pull down my barns, and build greater*, were intended to denote the man's purpose to extend the sphere of his memory and understanding, which are the spiritual barns intended to be the repositories both of real and apparent goods. For in proportion as a good man extends the sphere of his memory and understanding, in the same proportion he extends also the sphere of the enjoyment, of his real goods; and, in like manner, in proportion as a wicked man extends the sphere of his memory and understanding, he extends also the sphere of the enjoyment of his apparent goods. For without memory and understanding no good, whether it be real, or apparent, can be made sensible to man, and of course, in the degree in which memory and understanding are increased and perfected in man, in the same degree will his sensation of good also be increased and perfected.

It is next said, *And there will I store all my fruits and my goods*. There is here a distinction between fruits and goods, which was not made in the former verse, where fruits alone are mentioned, for the term fruits relates to the apparent truths in the man's understanding, whilst the term goods relates to the apparent goods in the man's will; and the distinction between these fruits and goods is now first made, because the two principles of purpose and thought, or of will and understanding, begin now first to be noted. For the case is, that, both with a wicked man and a good man, the above principles are for a long time confounded and undistinguished, so that the man has no clear and precise views in his own mind of the distinct nature of each principle, but in process of time, as man advances towards maturity, whether in the ways of wickedness, or righteousness, the above principles become more and more distinct, so that the powers and offices of each are seen in the most exact discrimination.

It is further written, *I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry*.

To say to the soul is a form of speech expressive of interior thought, and thus it is demonstrated that in man there are two distinct principles of thought, the one interior, and the other exterior, or the one superior, and the other inferior, and that the man may speak from either of these principles, and either of these principles may speak to the other.

Accordingly, in the book of Psalms, we find the Psalmist frequently addressing his own soul, by which is to be understood, in respect to man, the discourse of his external man with his internal, and with respect to the Lord, the discourse of His Human, principle, or Humanity, with his Divine principle, or His Divinity. Thus, by the expression, *I will say to my soul*, the Lord would teach us the important lesson, that there are in us two distinct principles of thought, the one internal, and the other external, and that each can communicate with the other, and does communicate, as occasion requires.

By the *much goods laid up for many years*, in a natural or literal sense, is to be understood that the man abounded with a sufficiency of worldly wealth, to satisfy all his wants during his continuance here on earth. But in the internal or spiritual sense of the parable, by



much goods laid up for many years is to be understood, that the man had acquired a great store of knowledges in his understanding, which he unhappily mistook for real goods, and which he conceived would be his qualification for the enjoyment of eternal happiness. Therefore, he says, further, to his soul, take your ease, denoting that he was fully satisfied with his knowledges and apparent goods, without considering at all whether his life was in agreement with his knowledges, and whether his apparent goods were real as well as apparent. He adds, further, eat, drink, and be merry, to denote that he thought to appropriate to himself real good and truth, with all their joys, merely because he was in possession of the knowledges, which were intended to conduct, him to such a blessed appropriation.

It is lastly said in the parable, *But God said to him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided.*

God's saying to him, denotes the judgement or decision of the eternal truth, for all judgement comes from truth; and God's saying to him, you fool, denotes that, according to the judgement or decision of the eternal truth, all folly consists in storing up knowledges of what is good and true in the understanding, without applying those knowledges to the purification and reformation of the life, as was the case with this thoughtless man in the parable. By God saying, this night shall your soul be required of you, is to be understood, that whilst the man was not aware of it, he would be deprived of the heavenly faculty of comprehending truth; for by the night, here spoken of, is meant a state of obscurity, by which all are finally overtaken who imbibe knowledges with eagerness, but neglect the life of knowledge; and by the soul being required, is not meant the separation only of the soul from the body, according to the literal idea suggested by the expression, but the separation or extinction of all heavenly intelligence and wisdom, which properly constitutes the inmost soul of every man who is born into the world. Lastly, by the significant question, *Whose shall all those things be which you have provided?* is intended to be expressed, the awful judgement, that the knowledges which the man had stored up with so much eagerness in his mind, would all be taken away from him, so as no longer to belong to him, this being the eternal law of the divine order, that all knowledge, which is not formed into man's life, so as to control his evil affections and corrupt appetites, and to conduct him to the love and enjoyment of the Supreme Good and the Supreme Truth, shall finally cease to be his property, and be given to others, and this with a view even to the man's well-being, since it is better for every one to be deprived entirely of the knowledge of truth, than to possess it and not live according to it.

In the application of this parable, it is written, *So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.*

The *treasure* here spoken of, in the sense of the letter, means worldly wealth and property, but in the spiritual sense, spiritual treasure, consisting in the abundance of knowledges of heavenly truth above spoken of. And *by a man laying up this treasure for himself, and not being rich toward God,* is meant the misapplication of such treasure, by applying it to the gratification of selfish and worldly love, and thus to earthly ends of life, instead of directing it to the glory of God by the removal of such earthly ends, and by rendering it instrumental in effecting his elevation to heavenly and eternal ends, thus to the promotion of eternal happiness, by effecting conjunction with God in life, and love, and blessedness.

According to the literal sense of the parable, we are taught the important and edifying lesson, to beware of worldly covetousness, and for this purpose to be content with that

share of worldly property which a merciful Providence has been pleased to store upon us. And, according to the spiritual or internal sense of the parable, we are taught the still more important and instructive lesson to beware of spiritual covetousness: in other words, to take heed how we covet and store up the treasures of truth and knowledge, with no other view than to gratify our vanity and selfish pride, or to gain worldly honours and pre-eminence, when we ought rather to apply those truths and knowledges to the heavenly purposes for which, by a kind Providence, they were bestowed upon us, namely, to effect our purification from our natural evils, to control our passions and appetites, to open our minds upwards towards God and Heaven, to enable us to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves, and thus, finally, to restore in us the life, the order, the peace, the image, and likeness of our Heavenly Father. Amen.

## THE PARABLE

### LET YOUR LOINS BE GIRDED ABOUT, AND YOUR LIGHTS BURNING.

Luke 12:35-40.

*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He comes and knocks, they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find watching: verily I say to you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And know this, that if the owner of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not.*

By the *loins* are figured and represented the affections of man, thus the things belonging to his will, or love; and by the loins, therefore, being girded, is denoted the gathering up of the affections out of mere natural and external objects, and directing them towards spiritual and eternal ones, agreeably to which sense of the word girding, it is said, concerning the Great Redeemer, *Righteousness* [or Justice], *shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins* (Isaiah 11:5), denoting that His affections, which are here figured by loins, were directed towards an eternal object, or the Supreme Good in Himself; and that His thoughts, which are here figured by His Reins, were held in the same direction, thus pointing to the Supreme Truth. Agreeably to the same language of figure and correspondence, by lights are to be understood the thoughts of man, or the things of his intellect; and by these lights burning is further to be understood, that the thoughts, or intellectual things, belonging to man, shall always be kept under the influence of heaven-born love and charity, which is the sacred fire from which all light, properly so called, proceeds, and by which alone it is kept alive.

By *Men that wait for the Lord* are spiritually to be understood truths derived from good, and directed towards good; for by men are spiritually meant truths; and by the Lord is denoted the Supreme Good. To be *like*, then, *to men that wait for the Lord*, denotes conformity to truths derived from, and directed to, good, for one thing becomes like another, when it becomes conformable to it.

*The wedding* denotes the marriage of Divine good and Divine truth, or of the divinity and humanity in the person of the Great Redeemer, whose High and Holy name is Jesus Christ; and the Lord *returning from this wedding* further denotes, the operation of the Great Redeemer from His Divine Humanity, when the union of the two natures, the divine and human, was accomplished in His glorified Person. His coming and knocking, therefore, means His approach and access to man in the power of His Holy Spirit, or of His Divine Good and Divine Truth; coming having relation to the operation of His Divine Good, and knocking to the operation of His Divine Truth, whilst both expressions united denote His continual presence with man, to the intent that He may replenish him with the fullness of divine love and wisdom, agreeably to the declaration in another place, where He says of Himself, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him and dine with him, and he with Me* (Rev. 3:20). For, in these words, standing at the door and knocking, means the presence and

operation of the Divine Good and Divine Truth continually with man; and man's hearing His voice, and opening the door, denotes the reception of that divine good and truth by man in his will and understanding; and, lastly, coming to and supping with him, and he with Me, describes the mutual conjunction of the Lord with man, and of man with the Lord, by virtue of the communication and reception of the divine operation.

*Opening* evidently means the opening of the door of the mind, at which the Lord knocks, that so admission may be given to Him; in other words, that He may be received in His own divine love and wisdom. For such is the case with every human mind, that it is capable of admitting into itself the blessed influences of heaven and its God, and that it really does admit those influences, whenever it is careful to open the door, that is to say, to remove the impediments which prevent their admission. To open to Him immediately, therefore, evidently means, such a habit of removing the above impediments, arising chiefly from self-love and the love of the world, that the Lord, when He comes, may find a quick and ready entrance, and thus may communicate His divine blessings without either difficulty or delay.

It follows, *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find so watching.*

The term blessed, whenever it occurs in the Word of God, is always applied to denote conjunction of life with the Most High, thus to denote the reception of His most holy love and wisdom, since nothing but such reception, and the conjunction to which it leads, can make a man blessed. Blessedness, therefore, implies the possession of an eternal good, and is thus distinguished from that false and short-lived happiness, which is sometimes mistaken for blessedness, and which consists merely in the possession of temporal and worldly goods.

The principles which constitute blessedness are the Divine love and the Divine wisdom, and, therefore, man is blessed according to his reception of those principles. This is what Jesus Christ here declares, when He says, *Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find so watching*; for by the Lord coming, as was above observed, is meant His continual presence and operation with man by His Holy Spirit of love and wisdom; and by watching is denoted preparation on the part of man to receive the heavenly influence, watching being opposed to sleeping, and being thus expressive of a spiritual state of mind, as sleeping is expressive of a natural state. Man, accordingly, is said to watch when he lives under the influence of heavenly truth; as, on the other hand, he is said to sleep, when he is under the influence of mere natural truth. It is said, so *watching*, because the term so has relation to what goes before concerning opening immediately, and thus the two words, so watching, have respect to the joint preparation of the human will and understanding to receive divine influence.

It is afterwards written concerning those blessed servants. *Verily I say to you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them.* The term verily is here applied to denote both the certainty and importance of what immediately follows concerning the blessedness of the servants here spoken of, which blessedness is described in the words, *He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to eat, and come forth to serve them.*

By *He* is here to be understood the Lord, who was spoken of in the words immediately preceding; and by the Lord girding Himself is further to be understood His intense love, by which He is desirous to enter into conjunction with those who are prepared to receive

Him; and by making them *to sit down to eat* is further denoted, the influx of the divine good of His love into their wills, for by sitting down to eat is signified the reception of that good; and, lastly, by coming forth to *serve them*, is signified the influx of the divine truth of His wisdom into their understandings; for by coming forth, when predicated of the Lord, is signified His operation of His divine truth; and by serving is denoted the office or use of that truth. Thus the three expressions combined denote the fullness of the divine influx, by virtue of which all recipient subjects are replenished with all the goods and truths of the divine love and wisdom of the Most High.

By the *two watches* are, denoted states of spiritual or regenerate life; by the *second watch* a state in which good and truth are fully conjoined; and by the *third watch*, a state of the full reception of those heavenly principles; for by watches are meant divisions of time, and by times, according to the spiritual idea, are meant states of spiritual or regenerate life. Again, by *finding them so*, is meant the divine inspection, and the discovery thence resulting, that the above servants were watching; in other words, were prepared to receive divine influx. It, therefore, follows, *Blessed are those servants*, to denote that the preparation to receive divine influx is the certain qualification to receive it.

When the blessed Jesus says, *Know this*, He evidently means to fix the attention of his hearers to a subject of great importance; for to know signifies to consider and to understand, and whatsoever the Blessed Jesus calls His hearers to consider and understand, must of necessity be a thing of importance. What this thing of importance is, appears from the words which follow; for by *the good man of the house*, here spoken of, is to be understood the ruling principle in the human mind; the term hours being expressive, according to the spiritual idea, of the interiors and exteriors of the human mind; whilst the term good man is equally expressive of the ruling principle which guides and governs them. In like manner, by knowing *what hour the thief would come*, is spiritually to be understood perception or discernment of those false persuasions in the human mind, which, being injected by the powers of darkness, would induce man to believe that his life is his own, independent of God, and thus tempt him to ascribe merit to himself, instead of ascribing it to the Divine Giver of all good. For every such persuasion is called a thief in the language of inspiration, because it robs God of His Glory, and appropriates that to the creature, which belongs properly and solely to the Creator. It is, accordingly, said of the *owner of the house*, that *if he had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into*; because by knowing *what hour the thief would come*, is to be understood spiritual perception and discernment, that the great enemy of man is ever at hand injecting the above false persuasions, and that there is no effectual security against their poison but watchfulness, or a state of spiritual thought, by which is to be understood, thought influenced by the Eternal Truth, without which thought the exteriors and interiors of the mind must inevitably be overrun and desolated by false and infernal persuasions. This desolation is expressed in the parable by the house being broken into, or, as it is written in the original, dug through, because the term digging is applied to denote the operation of thought, whether it be grounded in good or evil.

Then follow the admonitory words, *Be you therefore ready also; for the Son of man comes at an hour when you think not*. By being ready is to be understood preparation to receive divine influx, which preparation is the effect of watchfulness; and by the Son of man coming is further to be understood the Eternal Truth in its connection with its divine source, the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ, which is said to come in two respects; first,

when a new revelation is made for the establishment of a new church here on earth, in the place of an old one, in which it had been perverted, falsified, and destroyed; and, secondly, when it is imparted by influx to every individual man, for the purpose of making him a church; in other words, of reforming and regenerating him. It is said of this *Son of man* that *He comes at an hour when you think not*, to denote that the influx of the Eternal Truth with man is perpetual, thus in all states of life, even in those when man is least aware of, or disposed to believe in any such influx.

It is written, further, *Then Peter said to Him, Lord, speak you this parable to us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing.* By Peter is here to be understood the faith of the Church, or, what amounts to the same, the principle of intelligence in those who are of the Church, inquiring concerning the extent of obligation to obey the truth of revelation, and how far that obligation was intended to be confined to those to whom the revelation is first made, or to reach to future and remote generations. The Lord, accordingly, makes His reply by another question, addressed to the faith, or intelligence, of the Church, because He foresaw that, in the proper answer to His question, the faith, or intelligence, of the Church, would find a full and satisfactory answer to its own question. For when He asks, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?* He was well aware that this question would lead to a reply the most edifying and instructive in the mind of every intelligent being, because every intelligent being must of necessity discover in the character of a faithful and wise steward a portrait of every excellence; and that, consequently, to consider this character attentively must have a tendency to conduct to the possession of that excellence. For a steward obviously means one who ministers; and the term is, therefore, here applied by the Blessed Jesus to denote the natural man, or mind, which ministers to the spiritual, and which is called faithful and wise when it stands and operates in conformity to the spiritual; faithful, when it is in conformity to spiritual truth; and wise, when in conformity to spiritual good. Inquiry is further made, in these words, *Whom the Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season*, because when the natural mind becomes a faithful and wise steward, it becomes qualified to be invested by the Almighty with spiritual power and dominion, communicated through the spiritual mind, by virtue of which it *rules over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season*; in other words, it controls and regulates all the subordinate affections and thoughts, together with all the bodily senses and appetites, imparting to each its proper nourishment and vigour from the spiritual mind, thus from the God of that mind, according to the necessities and requirements of each. It is, therefore, added, *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing*, to teach the important lesson, that when the natural mind ministers to the spiritual, and thus becomes a faithful and wise steward, it then partakes of the blessedness of the spiritual mind, being brought together with it into conjunction of life with heaven and its God; and it is further added, *Of a truth I say to you, that He will make him ruler over all that He has*, to teach the additional interesting lesson, that when the natural mind becomes, as above, conformable to the spiritual mind, it is then gifted by its Divine Lord with power over all things, because connecting itself with omnipotence in humility and obedience, it uses all the gifts of God to His glory, and the promotion of that universal happiness which He intends for all His creatures.

It is next said, *But if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delays his coming; and shall*

*begin to beat the men-servants and maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him to pieces, and will assign him his place with the unbelievers.*

As the preceding words describe the character and blessedness of the natural mind, when it becomes obedient to the spiritual, so these words describe the character and misery of the natural mind, when it becomes disobedient, by separating itself from spiritual control and government. For by *that servant saying in his heart, My Lord delays his coming*, is to be understood wilful carelessness, on the part of the natural mind, respecting the divine presence and influx; and by *beginning to beat the men-servants and maidservants*, is further to be understood the perversion, in such case, of natural scientifics and their affections, by separating them from the light of truth; and by eating and drinking, and being drunken, is, lastly, denoted, the appropriation of what is evil and false, together with insanity derived from erroneous persuasions, in consequence of the above perversion. Such is the terrible character of the natural mind in its state of disobedience to the spiritual; and its misery is further described in the words which immediately follow. For by *the Lord of that servant coming in a day when he looked not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware*, is to be understood judgement unexpectedly exercised upon the above evils and falses of the natural mind; and by cutting *him in sunder, and appointing him his portion with the unbelievers*, is further to be understood the condemnation into which the natural mind casts itself, by separating itself from the blessed influences of all heavenly good and heavenly truth.

Jesus Christ continues the application of the parable in these concluding words, *And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not [himself], neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many [blows]. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of blows, shall be beaten with few [blows]. For to whomsoever much, is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

These words teach, in general, the important lesson, that it is better to be ignorant of the truth, than to possess the knowledge of it, if that knowledge be not attended with conformable life and practice. For by *the servant which knew his Lord's will*, is figured and represented the natural mind enlightened by the knowledges of truth; and by that servant not preparing, neither doing *according to His will*, is further described the same mind inattentive alike to the requirements of truth, and acquirement of good; and by his being *beaten with many [blows]*, is denoted the greater misery into which such a mind plunges itself, in consequence of its greater knowledge. Again, by him *that knew not, and did commit things worthy of blows, being beaten with few*, is figured and represented the natural mind in a state of ignorance, and in a state of transgression grounded in ignorance, which state is here described as less miserable than a state of transgression accompanied with knowledge. It is, accordingly, added, *For to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*; because by much being given is denoted the affection of truth, and by much being committed is denoted the truth itself; and, therefore, the important lesson inculcated in the above words is, that in proportion to the affection of truth with which every one is gifted, and to the truth itself, which is committed to his care, will be the degree of criminality, if he does not profit by what is given and committed to him.

We learn, then, from this parable, that it is of the utmost importance for every one to set a

guard over his affections and thoughts, that so his affections may always have respect to an eternal end, and that his thoughts may always be guided by the light of the Eternal Truth. We learn, further, that with this view man ought continually to be attentive to divine influx, or to the operation of the Incarnate God in his own mind, that so he may readily and willingly comply with all its saving purposes of reformation and regeneration. We learn, again, that the blessedness of man consists in thus submitting his natural mind to the government and guidance of the divine love and wisdom in his spiritual mind, because by so doing he conjoins himself with Jesus Christ, whilst Jesus Christ conjoins Himself with him, so that they act together in unity. We learn, lastly, that, by this reciprocal conjunction, the natural mind becomes invested with omnipotence, by virtue of which it exercises dominion over all its affections and thoughts, and likewise over all bodily appetites and the delights of sense; whereas, without such conjunction, the natural mind perverts all goodness and truth, and, at the same time, appropriates to itself all that is evil and false, until it plunges itself into the insanity of every erroneous persuasion, and, finally, into condemnation. Let us resolve, therefore, to profit by the above instruction, and through the divine grace and mercy to watch well over all the motions and tendencies of our affections and thoughts, looking continually to divine influx for government and guidance. Thus may we hope that our natural minds will never be separated from the divine love and wisdom, but, complying willingly and faithfully with those blessed principles, will attain, finally, to that blessed state of dominion of which it is written, *Of a truth I say to you, that He will make him ruler over all that he has.* Amen.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE FIG TREE IN THE VINEYARD.

Luke xiii, 6-9.

*He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why occupy it the ground? And he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.*

There is no mention made of man, in the original, but only of a certain one, and by this certain one is to be understood the Divine Proprietor of the spiritual vineyard-the Church, and of every fig tree in that vineyard, - which proprietor is no other than the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or God in His Divine Humanity.

In the Sacred Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, it is customary to describe the principles which constitute the Church under the figure of various kinds of trees, particularly of the olive, the vine, and the fig tree; by the olive, denoting celestial good, or the good of love and charity; by the vine, spiritual good, or the good of faith and truth; and by the fig tree, natural good, or the good of obedience; which natural good is to be regarded as the result of celestial good and spiritual good, when these latter become operative, and manifest themselves in the natural principle. By the fig tree, then, planted in the vineyard, is to be understood the natural principle of man initiated into the truths of the Church, and, specifically, the Jewish church as to the natural principle.

The expression *he came*, has relation to the Divine love; and *sought* has relation to the inquisition of the Divine wisdom. To seek fruit, therefore, on the fig tree, denotes inquiry of the Divine wisdom, grounded in the Divine love, concerning natural good in the men of the Church, specifically of the Jewish church; and by finding none is evidently to be understood that no such good was as yet produced.

By saying *to the dresser of his vineyard*, is to be understood thought on the occasion from Divine truth, attended with perception from the Divine good, (which is here called the dresser of the vineyard), that there was no natural good as yet produced in the Church, during any period from its commencement to its end, which term is here expressed by three years; and by the command to cut it down, is further denoted the entire consummation of natural good, in consequence, of the above unfruitfulness. It is added, *Why occupy it the ground?* to teach, further, the significative principle that, when there is no good in the natural principle, then the natural principle is opposed to, and destructive of, the Church. The next words manifestly imply intercession on the part of the Divine love in favour of the barren fig tree, by which is to be understood the exercise of Divine forbearance, until the men of the Church be further tried as to fruitfulness in natural good. It is, therefore, said, *Let it alone for this year, till I dig about it, and dung it*, which words involve a further state of probation, both as to the understanding and the will; digging having relation to the purification of the understanding by truth, and dunging having relation to the purification of the will by good, leading man to reject and eject his natural evils, which, when so rejected and ejected, become like dung which renders the earth

fruitful, agreeably to which idea it is written concerning such natural evils, *Do to them as to the Midianites, as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison, which perished at Endor; they became as dung for the earth* (Psalm 83:9, 10). It is, therefore, added, in conclusion, *And if it bear fruit [well] and if not, then after that you shall cut it down*, to denote, that as fruitfulness is the end or design of a tree, and the reason of its existence, in like manner, the production of natural good is the end or design of the natural principle, and if this end or design be not accomplished, then the natural principle destroys itself.

This parable teaches us in the first place, to distinguish between the natural principle and the spiritual principle of the Church, and to see that the former was figured by the fig tree, whilst the latter was figured by the vine, or vineyard. It teaches, further, that the natural principle was created to administer to the spiritual, and that when this administers aright, it brings forth its proper fruit of goodness, or good works, by virtue of its connection with the spiritual principle, and thus with the Divine love and wisdom which have rule in that principle. The parable teaches, in the third place, that in the Jewish church, in particular, the natural principle was never in due subordination to the spiritual, and thus never produced its proper fruit; the consequence of which was, that notwithstanding the divine patience and forbearance, and all the methods used by the Almighty to purify the natural will and natural understanding of the men of that Church, they continued rebellious to the end, never suffering the divine love and wisdom to govern and direct the lower affections and thoughts of the natural mind. Let us resolve, therefore, to take warning by this parable of divine reproof, and so to attend to the fruitfulness of the fig tree in our own vineyard, that our Heavenly Father may not be disappointed when He comes to gather its produce, but may rather find that his digging and dunging have not been in vain. Thus may we hope that our natural minds will always be kept in due subordination to our spiritual minds, and our spiritual minds to the divine mind, so that when the Lord comes and seeks fruit, He may find it, and we may never hear the terrible sentence, *Cut it down; why occupy it the ground?* Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MAN INVITED TO A WEDDING.

Luke 14:7-12.

*And he put forth a parable to those which were invited, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying to them, When you, are invited by any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room: lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him; and he that asked you and him come and say to you, Give this man place; and you begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that asked you comes, he may say to you, Friend, go up higher: then shall you have worship in the presence of them that sit to eat with you. For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that asked him, When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor your brethren, neither your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbours: lest they also invite you again, and a compensation be made you.*

The invited, according to the sense of the letter, are all those invited to a natural feast, or wedding; but, according to the spiritual sense, are all those invited to a spiritual feast, or wedding; and since a spiritual feast, or wedding means conjunction of life and of love with Jesus Christ, and all are invited to such conjunction who receive the truths of God's Holy Word into their understandings, therefore, all such are here denoted by the invited.

Jesus Christ perpetually marks, or notes, the ruling disposition of all His children, and especially of those who, by receiving His Holy Word into their understandings, are invited to the marriage. He sees, therefore, how some are of an aspiring and proud temper, and how, consequently, they choose out the chief rooms; in other words, how they exalt themselves above others, imagining that they merit heaven more than others, and that their virtues have in them some superior excellence, which entitles them to some high and distinguished place in the favour of the Almighty.

The counsel which Jesus Christ gives to all such is this: *When you are invited by any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him.* This counsel strikes at the root of all human pride and vanity, by teaching us that we ought not to exalt ourselves in our own fancied esteem above others, but that we should rather delight in exalting others above ourselves, by delighting in their excellencies as much as in our own, and by thus wishing for them as high a place in the favour and kingdom of God as we wish for ourselves. Thus Jesus Christ would lay the axe to the root of our self-love, and, cutting down that infernal tree, would plant in its place the Tree of Life, with all the other plants of Paradise, consisting in the love of Himself, in charity towards our neighbour, and in all the graces and virtues of humility, contentment, patience, forbearance, and well-doing, resulting from that love.

But Jesus Christ adds, *lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him.* By a more honourable man than you, according to the natural or literal sense of the term, is meant one who is more distinguished by natural dignity, talent, and pre-eminence; but according to the spiritual idea, one who is more principled in the good of charity, thus, in respect of the Jews, it denotes the Gentiles, who, by virtue of the principle of good-will and charity, were accounted more honourable in the sight of Jesus Christ than the Jews, when yet

these latter had the advantage over the former, as being in possession of the knowledges of truth derived from the Holy Word. Jesus Christ would teach us, therefore, on this occasion, that the principle of charity is, in all cases, more honourable than the principle of faith; or, in other words, that the principle of good is more honourable than that of truth; for by *you* are here to be understood those who are called, or invited, to the marriage, and the call, or invitation, to the heavenly marriage is always given by the knowledge of heavenly truth.

Jesus Christ adds these further words of caution, *And he that asked you and him come and say to you, Give this man place, and you begin with shame to take the lowest room.* By the man here spoken of, is meant the more honourable man, by whom, according to the spiritual idea, is signified the principle of charity in relation to the principle of faith, or the principle of good in relation to that of truth. By giving this man place is, therefore, denoted, that the principle of faith, or truth, ought always to give place to the principle of charity or good; in other words, ought always to exalt the latter principles, so as to give them entire rule and pre-eminence. Jesus Christ, therefore, would teach us, by the above injunction, that the good of charity is the essential principle of His kingdom, and that faith, or truth, are only so far good as they conduct to the good of charity, and confirm it by giving it pre-eminence over themselves and over every other good. *Give this man place* is, therefore, an eternal law of salvation to all mankind, since salvation cannot possibly be attained until the good of charity is exalted above all the lower principles of what is called faith, or truth, or knowledge; whereas, whenever faith, and truth, and knowledge, submit themselves to the higher rule and government of charity, and thus to the highest rule and government of Jesus Christ, who dwells in charity as its essential life, in this case all the blessings of salvation are secured, because, in this case, man is admitted to the heavenly marriage, which consists in the conjunction of charity and faith in his purified bosom, and thus in his conjunction of life with the Living and Eternal God.

The *lowest room* in the Kingdom of Heaven, or at the heavenly marriage, is that of those who act from principles of faith, or truth, alone, as the highest place belongs to those who act from principles of charity, or love and goodness, conjoined with faith, or truth.

It is said, *And you begin, with shame to take the lowest room.* There are two kinds of shame; one originating in the opinions of men, which may be called natural shame; and the other originating in the opinion of God, which may be called spiritual shame. The shame here spoken of is of the latter description, consisting in a consciousness of having acted contrary to the divine opinion, or, what is the same thing, to the genuine truth of God's Most Holy Word, which is the shame of all those who exalt knowledge above the life of knowledge, fancying themselves wiser and better than others, merely because they abound in high speculations, and have their understandings overcharged with doctrines, articles of faith, and religious notions, whilst their hearts and lives are under the influence of worldly and selfish love, and as far from evangelical purity as those who are totally destitute of all knowledge of the eternal truth.

Jesus Christ continues His divine counsel in these words, *When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that asked you comes, he may say to you, Friend, go up higher.* We have already seen what is meant by being invited, and sitting down in the lowest room.

By *him that asked you*, according to the spiritual idea, is to be understood the Almighty Himself, whose name is Jesus Christ, and who bids, or invites, to the heavenly marriage, the whole human race, by the instrumentality of His Holy Word or Spirit enlightening

their understandings; and by His coming is meant His approach to man, and further manifestation of Himself in the power of holy love and charity in the will, to make His eternal abode with man. For the presence of Jesus Christ with man is two-fold, in his understanding and in his will; but this presence is never full, thus Jesus Christ is never said fully to come to man until He gains possession of the will, or love, of man, as well as of his understanding and thought.

The words, *He may say to you, Friend, go up higher*, denote an internal dictate in the mind, instructing man, that when charity is exalted above faith, or goodness above truth, or, what is the same thing, the things of the will above those of the understanding, then man is accepted of his Maker, and admitted into the true order of His heavenly life and kingdom; for by the words, *he may say to you*, is signified an internal dictate in the mind of him to whom they are addressed; and by the term friend is denoted acceptance with the Almighty; and by going up higher is further denoted, an elevation into the heavenly world, which elevation takes place with all those who become the friends of God through the conjunction of charity and faith, or of goodness and truth; and since this conjunction is effected principally by keeping the commandments of God, therefore, Jesus Christ says to His disciples, *You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you*.

It is added, as a ground of encouragement on this occasion, *Then shall you have worship in the presence of them that sit to eat with you*.

By those *that sit to eat*, when the heavenly marriage is treated of, as in the present instance, are to be understood all those in Heaven and on earth who appropriate to themselves the heavenly principles of charity and faith, or of good and truth, from Jesus Christ, and who thus have living conjunction with that Incarnate God, both in their wills, their understandings, and their lives; and by having worship in the presence of these, is signified acceptance with them, or such a friendly communication as subsists between members of the same family who have the same common Father, and are united with each other in the bonds of fraternal affection and tenderness. For such is the case with all those who are principled in real genuine charity, that they are the favourites of all in Heaven, inasmuch as they breathe the same spirit, eat the same bread, and rejoice in the acknowledgement that they derive life perpetually from the same Divine Source and Fountain.

From the application of this parable, where it is said, *Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted*, we learn that pride, and especially the pride of intellectual attainments, originating in the acquirement of knowledge separate from the life of knowledge, is in the most direct opposition to the love of God, and, consequently, most destructive of all spiritual or heavenly life. Such pride, therefore, must be abased, because, according to the spiritual idea, nothing is, or can be, exalted, but in proportion as knowledge submits itself to the life of knowledge; in other words, in proportion as faith bows down to the government of charity, and both to the government of Jesus Christ. We learn, further, that humility, and especially the humility of truth and knowledge, in their submission to the rule of goodness and purity, is a virtue most pleasing in the sight of God, and most beneficial to the eternal interests of its possessor, inasmuch as it is for ever joining in the heavenly song, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever* (Rev. 5:13), and is thus perpetually introducing man to association with the ever-blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us resolve, therefore, in compliance with the purport of this parable, to guard our souls, through the Divine Grace, against the infernal influence of

pride, and especially of that intellectual pride which would lead us to suppose that we are wiser and better than others, for no other reason than because we have much knowledge, and can talk learnedly about the things of God. And let us resolve, further, to cherish in ourselves above all things, through Divine assistance, the grace of humility, especially of that humility which exalts charity above faith, and the life of knowledge above knowledge itself, because we may perceive clearly that such humility opens the gates of Heaven, renders man a friend of God, and introduces him to the societies of the blessed in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE MAN INTENDING TO BUILD A TOWER, AND OF THE KING GOING TO WAR AGAINST ANOTHER KING.

Luke 14:28-35.

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest it happen, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first, and consults whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation, and desires conditions of peace. So likewise, any of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, with what shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Under the figure of a natural *tower*, Jesus Christ here describes a spiritual tower, which, like the natural tower, answers the double purpose of observation and defence. For as the natural tower has the double use of enabling those who are in it to discover the approach of an enemy, and also to withstand him, in like manner the spiritual tower has also its double use, but with this difference, that it enables those who are in it to discover the approach of, and to withstand spiritual enemies. Jesus Christ applies the term tower, in another parable, according to this same spiritual signification, where, speaking of the householder who planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants, He mentions among other things, that he built in it a tower, by which is evidently meant a spiritual tower, because the vineyard there spoken of is figurative of the Church.

By *intending* to build a spiritual tower is to be understood, that the spiritual builder has a serious purpose to secure himself against his spiritual enemies, and with this view, to note and observe their approach, together with all the arts and stratagems by which they would deceive and betray him.

It is evident that this tower cannot be built of any earthly materials, such as are the thoughts, the counsels, and the imaginations of man, but it must be built of heavenly materials, such as are the truths, the precepts, the doctrines of God's Most Holy Word, admitted into man's understanding, and incorporated into his life, that is to say, into his love. For when man thus imbibes and cherishes the truths, the precepts, and the doctrines of the revealed Word of the Most High, he then acquires an elevation of thought, which enables him to discover the approach of his spiritual foes, together with their qualities, their characters, and their artifices; and at the same time, and by the same means, he attains the spiritual strength resulting from such elevation of thought, whereby he is further enabled to oppose his enemies when they approach. This elevation of thought, therefore, is the spiritual tower here spoken of.

The reason why it is here said of the man intending to build a tower, that he sits down first, is that the sitting down, here spoken of, has respect to a state of rest, of peace, and tranquillity of mind, for sitting down is a position of the body, figurative of such rest, peace, and tranquillity, and is, accordingly, so applied in the Sacred Scriptures. Thus it is

written in the first verse of the 1st Psalm, *Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful*; from which words it is evident, that the three bodily acts of walking, standing, and sitting, are applied figuratively to denote similar corresponding acts of the mind, walking having respect to the thoughts and persuasions according to which man directs the course of his life; whilst standing has respect to man's confirmation of such thoughts and persuasions in his understanding; and sitting has respect to the same confirmation in the man's will, or love, as is the case when he takes rest and finds complacency in such thoughts and persuasions. Unless the term sitting had some such spiritual signification, and was so discerned in the Lord's divine idea, it is impossible to assign any reason why, in the present instance, He should apply the term.

It is added, that *he counted the cost, whether he had sufficient to finish it*. By counting the cost is here to be understood the taking an account of all the sacrifices necessary to be made, on the part of man, before he can attain conjunction of life with his Heavenly Father, and thus build in himself the high tower of everlasting protection and salvation. Those sacrifices, as it is afterwards stated, consist principally in a man forsaking all that he has, this being the full cost of building the above tower, that man should submit his own will and wisdom to the divine will and wisdom, man's own will and wisdom being alone that spiritual property which God requires him to forsake, because it is the only property which, if not forsaken, or, what is the same thing, if not submitted, prevents his conjunction with the Supreme Good and Supreme Truth. It is necessary then, that with the whole force of his will, signified by sitting down, and with all the powers of his understanding, signified by counting, he should make an estimate of this cost, until he discovers, that by forsaking his own will and wisdom, he separates himself from everything most defiled, miserable, and insecure, and by submitting to the Divine Will and Wisdom, he conjoins himself with everything most holy, blessed, and permanent.

The tower of divine protection is said to be finished when the truths of God's Most Holy Word have taken possession of man's will, or love, as well as of his understanding, or faith. For whilst truth is merely in the memory and understanding, it is not the tower, but only its foundation, nor can the tower be said to be finished, until it is built upon this foundation, in other words, until truth is elevated out of the memory and understanding, and incorporated into the life's love by a dutiful obedience to all its heavenly precepts, and especially by rejecting, as sins against God, all those natural evils, which the truth points out as opposite to the Divine Love and Purity.

The mockery of which Jesus Christ speaks, when He says, *All that behold it mock him*, was intended to express the extreme folly of the character which is here described, and of his conduct in storing up truth in his memory and understanding only, without applying it to the purification and regeneration of his heart and life. The Almighty Himself is accordingly described as laughing at, and having in derision, such character and conduct (see: Psalm 2:4); not that we are to suppose that God really laughs at and derides any of His creatures, but that His creatures, by their thoughtlessness and inconsideration, expose themselves to the Divine censure, and are accounted, in the sight of God, both as irrational and ridiculous, especially when they are guilty of that most irrational and ridiculous of all conduct, the acquiring the *science of truth*, without any serious intention to practise and incorporate it into their lives.

Jesus Christ, in this parable, under the figure of a tower, intimates the expediency and necessity imposed on every one, to build in himself the spiritual tower of divine,



observation and protection, He intimates, at the same time, that this lower cannot be built until the cost of building it be seriously and deliberately calculated, which cost consists in man's submitting his own will and wisdom to the Divine. Jesus Christ would instruct us further, that if this cost be not well counted, the building of the tower may, indeed, be begun, but cannot be finished; because the building of the tower is begun by the admission of truth into the memory and understanding, but it is not finished until the truth so admitted be elevated into the higher region of the will, or love, and it cannot be so elevated until man submits himself entirely, and without reserve, to the government and guidance of the Divine Love and Wisdom. Lastly, Jesus Christ would teach us, in this parable, that there is no instance of irrationality more glaring, and more deserving of censure, than this, to store up the knowledge of heavenly things in the understanding without suffering that knowledge to influence the affections and the life, by conjoining it with holy love and charity, this being the insanity pointed at in the concluding words of the parable, where it is said, *This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

Jesus Christ annexes to this parable another, concerning *a king going to make war against another king*. The connection between the two parables is discerned when we look beyond the letter. The first relates to a state of spiritual protection, or of security and rest from spiritual foes; but the second relates to a state of spiritual combat, which is necessary to conduct to such rest and security.

Mention is there made of *a king going to make war against another king*, and by these two kings are figuratively described the principles of truth and error, namely, of truth from God by His Holy Word, and of error from the powers of darkness, by the fallacies and perverse reasonings which they inject into the mind in opposition to the Divine Truth. God, therefore, as being the Supreme Truth, and possessing thereby dominion over all things both in Heaven and the Church, is frequently called, in the Sacred Scripture, a King, and sometimes King of Kings, whilst His adversary, as being the great liar, and father of lies, and possessing thereby dominion in his own infernal regions, is likewise called a king (See: Rev. 9:11). Now, all spiritual combat, it is well known, consists in this conflict in the human mind, between the heavenly powers of truth, and the infernal powers of error, and every man's salvation, or destruction, depends on the issue of this conflict. Jesus Christ, accordingly, teaches in this parable, how this combat may be waged to the greatest advantage, and, moreover, that everyone who would engage successfully in this combat, must *sit down first and consult, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand.*

By sitting down, as has already been shown in the explanation of the former parable, is to be understood a state in which the will, or love, begins to be affected by the truths stored up in the memory, or understanding. Thus it denotes a serious purpose and intention respecting the warfare which is here treated of, and is designed to instruct us, that we can never fight successfully against our spiritual foes, the powers of darkness, without such a serious purpose and intention.

The term consulting relates more to the understanding, or judgement, as sitting down relates more to the will, or love, and therefore the two expressions, in their conjoint meaning, were intended to teach us the important lesson, that we can never fight to advantage against our spiritual foes, only so far as both our wills and understandings, our affections and judgement, are exercised on the occasion, more especially in making the estimate of the powers which are for us, and of those which are against us; in other words, of the power of truth in its connection with the Lord and His holy angels, and of the

power of error in its connection with the devil and his angels.

These powers are differently estimated in the parable, for the powers of truth are said to be ten thousand, whilst the powers of error, which are contrary to the truth, are called twenty thousand. To account for this disparity in numbers, and discover why the heavenly powers, which defend man, should be rated only at ten thousand, when the infernal powers, which destroy man, are rated at twenty thousand, or twice the number of the former, we must reflect that this is spoken according to appearance, since to the natural man it always appears that the powers of evil are stronger than the powers of good, when in reality the case is quite reversed, because, in reality, evil has no power when opposed to good, and good has all power when opposed to evil. The case, therefore, is, that so long as man himself is in evil and its love, so long he gives power to evil, and evil in such case, appears powerful; but no sooner does he set himself to oppose evil, from a real hatred of its abomination and defilements, and from a real love to the Supreme Good, than evil loses, by degrees, its power, and good obtaining the ascendancy, increases, by degrees, its power, until at length it becomes all-powerful, and destroys the power of evil. This, therefore, is the reason why man, in this parable, is exhorted to sit down and consult concerning the strength and ability of the above power, since it is by deliberate wisdom alone, and a life in agreement with it, that man is enabled to make the right estimate of the omnipotence of his heavenly friends, and of the impotence of his infernal foes.

The consequences of the want of consultation are described in these words, *that while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation, and desires conditions of peace*. By the other being *yet a great way off*, is to be understood, that the powers of evil and error have not yet gained a full possession of the man's will, or love, for both good and evil are said to be at a distance from man, in proportion as they do not enter into and gain a place in his affections. Whereas in the degree that they gain such a place, in the same degree they are said to be near. For space is not predicable of spirit, since spirit is no subject of the measurement of space, and, therefore, in regard to spirit, all distance is estimated by affection, those things being said to be near in which the affection is interested, and to be a great way off when the affection is not interested.

Sending *a delegation* has relation to the man's thought, and desiring *conditions of peace* has relation to the man's affection; for thought, whether good or evil, is as a kind of ambassador to the kingdom of good or of evil, according to its determination; whilst affection, which is always one with thought, yet distinct from it, is desirous of confirming the terms which thought proposes. In this case, therefore, the two expressions of sending *a delegation*, and desiring *conditions of peace*, denote the conjoint result of the man's thought and affection, in making a compromise with his spiritual foes, the powers of darkness, which compromise is signified by desiring conditions of peace; in other words, by desiring not to enter into combat against evil and error, but rather to befriend and seek alliance with those infernal powers. The peace, here spoken of, does not mean real peace, because it is impossible that such peace can exist until man vigorously opposes in himself, and successfully conquers, his own natural evils, which hold him in confederacy with the powers of darkness; but it means apparent peace, or that false and deceitful rest with which some people remain satisfied, without ever considering that they are in the hands of a merciless tyrant, and that, in such case, whatsoever temporal peace and composure they may enjoy, yet in the end, they will certainly be exposed to all the disquietude and torment which must ever arise from unmortified lusts.

We learn, from this parable, that before we can hope to become regenerate, and to secure

thereby a crown of eternal glory, we must pass through a course of spiritual warfare, which is here signified by *one king going to make war with another king*. We learn, further, that our success in this spiritual warfare will depend upon our sitting down and consulting respecting the powers which are for us, and those which are against us; in other words, it will depend on the estimate which we make of the Divine Omnipotence, and of the comparative non-ability of those who oppose it. And since we cannot be qualified to make this estimate, only so far as we submit our own will and wisdom to the Divine, which is meant by forsaking all that we have, therefore, this entire submission is also taught us in this parable. Lastly, we learn that if we never enter into such a state of submission, and thus never sit down and consult the comparative powers of our heavenly friends and of our infernal foes, we shall then become quiet slaves and base dependents in the hands of the latter, never exerting the powers which God has given us to regain heavenly liberty, thus never entering into any combat against any evil of our corrupt nature, but hugging our chains, and calling it peace, when, at the same time, we are under the tyrannical rod and restless dominion of all the powers of darkness.

To the above parables Jesus Christ annexes a third, concerning salt, in these remarkable words, *Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, with what shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that has ears to hear, let him hear*. Salt, when mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, has two significations, a good one, and a bad one, as is common also with almost every other term, and in its good signification it is applied to denote the genuine affection of truth, as in 2 Kings, 2:20, 21, 22, where the prophet Elisha is spoken of as *healing the water which was bad, by casting salt into it*, denoting that truth, separate from genuine affection, is not properly truth, but something perverted and defiled, and that it only recovers its proper quality by being united with a genuine affection: and in its bad signification it is applied to denote truth without affection, as in Genesis, 19:26; Deut. 29:23; Judg. 9:45; Ezek. 47:11; Zeph. 2:9.

*Salt* having *lost its savour*, denotes the affection of truth not genuine, for truth may be received by man under the influence of various affections. Thus, when man receives truth and delights in it for its own sake because it is truth, and leads to conjunction with the Supreme Good, he is then said to receive it with a genuine affection; but if he receives truth and delights in it, because it may be instrumental in raising his reputation in the world, or in advancing his temporal interests, he is then said to receive it with an affection not genuine, thus with an affection defiled and perverted, in which case the salt is said to have lost its savour.

When, therefore, Jesus Christ said of this *salt which has lost its savour, Wherewith shall it be seasoned?* He meant to teach, by this significant question, the great difficulty of recovering the genuine affection of truth, when it has been once perverted, and thus He would lead us to be continually upon our guard as to the quality of the affection by which we admit the truth, and to take especial heed that our affection be genuine; in other words, that we love the truth for its own sake, and not for the sake of worldly distinction and temporal advantages.

When Jesus Christ further said of the salt which has lost its savour, that it was *neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out*, He meant to instruct us that truth which does not point to God and lead to the practice of what is good, conduces to no use whatever, either good or evil, for by being unfit for the land is denoted, that it conduces to no good use, such as relates to the benefit of Heaven or of the Church, both which are

signified by land. By being unfit for the dunghill is denoted, that it conduces to no evil use, such as relates to the infernal kingdom, for by the dunghill is signified that kingdom; and, lastly, by men casting it out, is denoted that it is no constituent principle of man, in other words, that it makes no part of the human constitution properly considered.

Jesus Christ adds, as a conclusion to the three foregoing parables, *He that has ears to hear, let him hear*; thus calling the attention of His disciples, in a particular manner, to the instruction contained in the three parables to which they are annexed as a conclusion. For by him who has ears to hear is meant the true disciple who receives truth with its proper affection, that is to say, who loves it and delights in it, because it is truth, and because it conducts to the Supreme Good; and by the words, let him hear, is intended to be expressed the importance of what precedes, namely, concerning the building a tower, one king going to war against another king, and salt. Jesus Christ, therefore, meant to instruct us further, by the above words, that nothing is of more importance to our everlasting interests than to attend to the building of a spiritual tower of observation and protection; also to the spiritual warfare which every Christian must undergo before he can be suitable to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; also to the affection with which we receive the truth, taking good heed that it be a genuine affection, or the love of truth for its own sake, and not a spurious affection, or the love of truth for the sake of worldly gain, honour, or reputation. Lastly, Jesus Christ meant to teach us the absolute necessity of submitting our own will and wisdom to the Divine, or of forsaking all that we have, since without such submission it is impossible we should either build the spiritual tower, or fight successfully against, our spiritual foes, or receive the truth with a genuine affection.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE LOST SHEEP.

Luke 15:3-7.

*And He spoke this parable to them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say to you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.*

By man is here to be understood the Church, as to the understanding of truth; as in the following parable concerning the lost piece of silver, by woman is to be understood the Church as to the affection of truth. These two parables, therefore, are in connection with each other; the first relating to the good of one who repents, signified by the lost sheep; and the second relating to the truth belonging to him who repents, signified by the lost piece of silver. The obvious tendency, therefore, of the two parables united, is to show that both good and truth, when lost and restored again, are rendered dearer and more precious than if they had never been lost.

Sheep, in the Sacred Scriptures, denote such as are principled in heavenly good, agreeably to which idea Jesus Christ calls His disciples *sheep* (John 10:27), and says to Peter, *feed my sheep* (John 21:16, 17). By sheep, therefore, are to be understood goods in the abstract, and by a hundred sheep, the complex or aggregate of such goods.

If the sheep are considered in regard to persons, then by losing one of them is to be understood the falling away from good in a Church in general, or in a member of a Church in particular. But if by sheep are to be understood goods in the abstract, then by losing one of them is to be understood deficiency of any particular good.

The wilderness, according to a spiritual idea, signifies what has as yet little of life, or what is altogether uncultivated. It denotes also an obscure principle of faith and love, and likewise a state of spiritual temptation. By leaving, therefore, the ninety and nine in the wilderness, is to be understood, that in consequence of a falling away from good, or of the deficiency of good, signified by the sheep which was lost, the other goods in connection with it were brought into distress and trial, and thus into a diminution of life and power, such being the connection between the various orders and genera of goods, that if one perish or be lost, all the rest suffer injury, and experience a deprivation in some measure of their life.

By that which is lost, it has been already seen, is meant the good belonging to the man who repents; and by going after this good is to be understood, the endeavour to recall it to its original; in other words, to bring it back to conjunction with the Supreme Good, which is God. For the case with the lost sheep, or the good belonging to the man who repents, is this, that it becomes what is here called a lost sheep, by declining from the Supreme Good, and imagining itself to be a good in a state of separation from the Divine Good. To go after this lost sheep, therefore, is to recall the good signified thereby to re-conjunction

with its Divine Original; and to find it, is to restore it to that original.

But it is said in the parable, that *when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*

By the shoulders, whenever the expression occurs in the Sacred Scriptures, is always understood the highest degree of power and energy; and, therefore, by laying the lost sheep on his shoulders, is to be understood, in reference to the good which is here signified by the sheep, the calling it to its original with all his might and energy.

The term *rejoicing* is here applied to denote the joy communicated on the occasion, by the restoration, to its Divine Original, of a good which had been separated from that original, this being the joy, as we are afterwards informed, which the angels themselves experience, and which is declared to be a greater joy than that which results from the possession of a good which has never thus declined from conjunction with the Supreme Good.

It is further said, that *when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.*

By the *man*, here spoken of, as was observed above, is meant the Church, as to the understanding of truth, and the understanding of truth is said to come *home*, when it enters into conjunction with the good from which it is derived, and towards which it pants. For all truth is derived from good, and is always seeking conjunction with its parent. Whilst, therefore, it is in a state of separation from its parent, it is said to be abroad, and is called, in Holy Scripture, a wanderer, or vagabond, but when it returns to conjunction with its parent good, it is then said to come. Thus Cain, when he had slain his brother Abel, and thereby extinguished charity in his own mind, was willed a fugitive and vagabond in the earth (Gen. 4:14). And thus it is said of the children of Ephraim, when they separated knowledge from the life of knowledge, which is heavenly love and charity, that they should be wanderers among the nations (Hosea 9:17).

*Friends* and *neighbours*, according to the literal or natural meaning of the terms, mean persons so related, but according to the spiritual idea they mean principles, and those who are related and connected according to such principles. Thus by the friends and neighbours, here spoken of, are to be understood all heavenly principles of understanding and of life, and they who are connected by those principles. And since all heavenly principles of understanding and of life have relation to love and wisdom, or, what is the same thing, to goodness and truth, or, what is still the same thing, to charity and faith; therefore these principles are what are here respectively signified by friends and neighbours. Thus these two terms involve in them all the angelic host, and also all that are good and wise here upon earth; for these being principled in heavenly love and wisdom, goodness and truth, charity and faith, are properly the friends and neighbours of all those who stand in the character of the man here described in the parable, who had recovered his lost sheep.

By calling together these friends and neighbours is, therefore, signified association and conjunction with the angelic host, and with all the wise and good here upon earth; and by saying to them, *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost*, is meant a dictate from the understanding of truth in the Church, that all heavenly principles of love and of wisdom, or of charity and of faith, ought to unite in the affecting sentiment that the good of repentance, or a good restored after it had been lost, is a greater good, and, consequently, an object of greater joy than the original good which has never gone astray.

Accordingly, it follows, that *joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance*; where by joy in heaven is to be understood, joy amongst angelic principles; and by over one sinner that repents more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, is to be understood, on account of a good lost and recovered, more than over the good which has never departed from its original rectitude.

From this parable we learn, in the first place, to adore that divine mercy, which is ever waiting and labouring to call sinners to repentance, and which is disposed to receive the wandering sheep back again into its bosom. We learn, therefore, never to despair of the tenderness of that mercy, whenever we are willing in sincerity to forsake our sins, and to take refuge in the arms of our God and Saviour. And, lastly, we learn, to our unspeakable consolation, that whenever we are sincere in doing the work of repentance and conversion to our heavenly Father, our sins will not only be remembered no more, but they will also be made to administer to our greater happiness in the heavenly world, by rendering us more sensible of the compassion, tenderness, and love of our heavenly Father, than we could otherwise have been. Let us resolve, therefore, now on, in compliance with the above lessons, to hasten our repentance and conversion without delay, not abusing the mercy of God by continuing in sin, but rather using it as an encouragement to repentance whilst we see it disposed, not only to blot out our transgressions, but also to make them subservient to the promotion of our greater happiness, whenever we truly hate and forsake them from a real principle of love towards God and our neighbour.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER.

Luke 15:8-10.

*Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.*

The woman here mentioned, as was observed in the explanation of the foregoing parable, denotes the Church, as to the affection of truth, agreeably to which idea the Church is frequently, in the Sacred Scriptures, compared to a virgin, and called a virgin, as the Virgin of Zion, and the Virgin of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:15, Lam. 2:13; Amos 5:2), and also the Lamb's Bride and Wife; and by her having ten pieces of silver, is to be understood, her being in possession of all heavenly truths necessary for her purification and conjunction with her heavenly Bridegroom and Husband.

It may be proved from the Sacred Scriptures, that by ten pieces of silver are meant all heavenly truths; and this, not only from the general consideration that the knowledge of holy truth is frequently, in the Sacred Scriptures, compared to money, and called money, as talents and pounds (Matt. 25:14-32; Luke 19:12-28), but also from the particular consideration that it is frequently compared with and called silver, from which money is coined. Thus it is written in the prophet Isaiah, *Your silver is become dross* (Is. 1:22), where it is evident that the prophet is speaking not of the metal called silver, but of the knowledge of heavenly truth signified by that metal. So, again, *for iron I will bring silver* (60:17), where it is again evident, that by silver is to be understood the purer dispensation of holy truth which was given at the manifestation of God in the flesh, for the prophet is here speaking of the blessings to be imparted to mankind by that manifestation. Again, *Israel, they are even as the, dross of silver* (Ezek. 20:18), by which words is manifestly described the perversion of truth by the Jewish nation, in consequence of which they had lost, all knowledge of genuine or spiritual truth, which is here called silver, and retained only natural or literal truth, which is here called dross. So, again, *He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver* (Mal. 3:3), speaking of the Lord's first advent in the flesh, and denoting the purification of the understandings of His people from all false and erroneous persuasions, by the manifestation of a pure order of spiritual and genuine truth.

Since by *ten pieces of silver* are to be understood all the knowledges of heavenly truth which constitute the Church, by losing one piece is evidently meant the loss of one of these knowledges, in consequence of which the state of the Church was become less perfect, pure, and stable, than it otherwise would have been. For the perfection, purity, and stability of the Church will always depend on the integrity of truth; in other words, on the several orders, genera, and species of truth being preserved inviolable and entire.

By a candle is to be understood the light of heavenly truth, derived from the Word of God, and enlightening the understanding of man. For in all truth there is light, but the light varies according to the order of truth from which it is derived. Thus, as in the natural world, there are different degrees of light, namely, the light of the sun, the light of the



moon, the light of the stars, and the light of a candle, so also in the spiritual world there are different degrees of spiritual light answering to the same, and being the effect of the reception of different orders and degrees of truth. By the candle, therefore, here spoken of, is to be understood the light of heavenly truth of the lowest order, such as is that which is derived from the literal sense of the word.

That the term candle has a spiritual signification is proved in the first place, from the book of Job, where mention is made of *the candle of the wicked being put out* (Job. 21:17), by which is to be understood, that the wicked extinguish in themselves the light of heavenly truth by their evil loves. Again, it is written, *When His candle shined upon my head* (Job. 24:3), by which is to be understood the wisdom which Job received from God. To the same purpose it is written in the book of Psalms, *You will light my candle* (Psalm 18:28) denoting also the illumination of wisdom from the Most High. Again, it is written in the book of Proverbs, *The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord* (Prov. 20:27), where it is plain the word candle is applied to express a spiritual idea.

It is said that the woman not only lighted a candle, but swept the house. *Sweeping the home* is to be understood, according to its spiritual meaning, in like manner as lighting a candle; nor can there be any difficulty in discovering what that meaning is, if it be considered what is to be understood by a house, according to a spiritual idea. For, in agreement with such idea, a house signifies the will-principle of man, because in that principle the love of man dwells, which is the real man; in that principle, too, if the love be purified, the Lord Himself dwells, and makes His everlasting abode. Accordingly, the Church, as consisting of purified human minds, or wills, is called in the Sacred Scriptures, the house of God, or of Jehovah.

The word *house* is applied according to a spiritual idea, in the Sacred Scriptures, wherever mention is made of the, *house of Jehovah*, of *the house of Judah*, of *the house of Israel*, etc.; for by the house of Jehovah it must of necessity be supposed that something spiritual is intended to be expressed, since it is impossible to conceive that Jehovah can dwell in any material building, therefore it is written, *The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands* (Acts 7:48); in like manner, by the house of Judah, and the house of Israel, is not to be understood any house of wood or stone in which those nations dwelt, but the spiritual principles of love and wisdom which formed their lives. Jesus Christ also applies the term house according to a spiritual idea, when he speaks of one who both hears and does His word, and compares him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock, since by a house upon a rock is to be understood the good of heavenly love and charity, grounded in the eternal truth; as by a house built on the sand, afterwards spoken of, is to be understood the will-principle of man not grounded in the eternal truth, but in false and erroneous persuasions, which have no coherence or consistency.

According to the above spiritual signification of house, as denoting the will and its love, by sweeping the house is meant the purification of the will from the filthy and unclean loves, such as are those of worldly gain and glory, and also corporeal pleasures, when they are regarded as the ruling ends of life. For the defilement of the will consists entirely in the separation of its loves from the love of God and neighbourly love, and, therefore, the purification of the will consists in regarding the love of God and neighbourly love as the supreme ends of life, and in bringing all other loves into submission to their heavenly influence, whereby other loves also become clean, and the house is thus entirely swept.

There are other passages in Holy Scripture which speak of sweeping according to the above spiritual idea. It is written in the prophet Isaiah, "*The voice of one crying in the*

wilderness, sweep you [prepare] the way of Jehovah (Is. 40:3); and, again, "Make level, make level, sweep [prepare] the way, remove the stumbling-block from the way of my people" (Is. 57:14). Again, in Malachi, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall sweep [prepare] the way before me" (Mal. 3:1). In which passages, to sweep the way denotes to make themselves ready, and to bring their wills into obedience to the eternal truth.

Mention is made further, of *seeking diligently till she find it*. The term seeking, when used in the Sacred Scriptures, has relation to the understanding in its search after heavenly truth, according to which sense it is said, *Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness* (Matt. 6:33); and, again, *Seek and you shall find* (Matt. 7:7). But the term, *diligently*, has relation more to the will, or love, because men are always diligent in the search of what they most love, and in proportion to the degree of their love. The two terms, therefore, when united, denote the conjoint application both of the understanding and the will in their exploration of the eternal truth, since the eternal truth can never be found but by the conjoined energy of both those faculties.

The additional expression, *till she find it*, denotes perseverance in the search of truth, and was intended to instruct us that the eternal truth can never be found without such perseverance. It was to instruct us, therefore, that the illumination of truth is not instantaneous, but gradual, and that we advance in such illumination in proportion to our sincerity in forming our lives according to the degree of knowledge which we have received. For, in regard to the illumination of truth, the case is this, that in its commencement it is at first faint and obscure, and becomes brighter and brighter in the degree in which it is exalted to rule and pre-eminence in the will and understanding. New truths are thus successively admitted and formed into the life, and in proportion as these are united with their proper loves, they give birth again to other generations of truth, and this in a continued series without end. None, therefore, can be said properly to find the truth, by retaining it only in their memories, or even viewing it by a clear light in their understandings, since the truth is never really found until it affects the will, or love, and is thence formed into the life by influencing man's daily conduct and operation.

We are taught by this parable, that the knowledge of the eternal truth is of the greatest importance to man, and that as this knowledge has been in a great degree lost by the general corruptions of human nature, therefore, it is every one's duty, as well as his happiness, to endeavour to recover it again. With this view it is necessary, in the first place, to explore the pages of the Word of God, and to follow the guidance of the heavenly light therein made manifest, signified in the parable by lighting a candle. It is necessary, in the next place, to cease from doing evil, and for this purpose to explore the secret intentions and thoughts of the heart, to discover towards what end or object they are principally directed, which is signified, further, in the parable, by sweeping the house. And, lastly, it is necessary to exert all our powers of understanding and of will on the occasion, and this with an earnestness suited to the immense value of the pearl of great price which we seek after, and with a perseverance which will never cease until the truth be fully formed and fixed in our lives, as the greatest and most durable of all blessings, all which is further understood in the parable, by seeking diligently till she find it. Let us resolve, therefore, through the divine grace and mercy, now on to regard the acquisition of truth as a possession of infinitely higher estimation and importance than any other, and, accordingly, to seek it with all that never-ceasing application to the Word of God, continual purity of life, and diligent persevering exercise of our best faculties, which may be necessary to conduct us to the attainment of the prize, *more to be desired than gold*,

*yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb (Psalm 19:10).*

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE PRODIGAL SON.

Luke 15:11-32.

*And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided to them his property. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would rather have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave to him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the home, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this your son has come, who has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And he said to him, Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours. It was necessary that we should make merry, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

By a certain man is to be understood the Great Father of the universe; and by His two sons are here meant to be described two general classes of mankind; the first, including those who do not wander so far as others in the way of disobedience from their Father's house; and the second, including those who wander, and afterwards return by repentance; or, in other words, the first, including those who stand more in original good; and the second, including those who attain to what may be called the good of repentance.

It is said of the younger, that he said to his Father, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided to them his property.* The *portion of goods* here spoken of means a portion of spiritual goods, and not mere natural wealth or property; and all spiritual goods have relation principally to the things contained in the two faculties of the will and understanding. Thus the younger son, by desiring the portion of goods which fell to him, manifested an inclination to possess spiritual property independent of his Father,

thus to separate from his Father the things of his will and of his understanding.

By the Father's *living* is meant His life, that is to say, His love and His wisdom, for all the life of God has relation to these two divine principles, which God, therefore, in His mercy, is disposed to communicate to all His children, and for the reception of which He has endowed all His children with the two faculties of will and understanding.

It is said, that *not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* By gathering all together are to be understood all the principles of his mind and life which he had derived from the two grand fountains of his life, the will and understanding; and by taking *his journey into a far country*, is further to be understood his departure from dependence on his Heavenly Father, to live to himself and the world, separate from divine guidance and governance.

His *substance* means the faculty which he had received from his Heavenly Father of understanding truth, and thereby of procuring to himself an eternal good; and wasting this his substance, in riotous living, further implies, that he nearly destroyed in himself that faculty, by immersing it in mere selfish and earthly loves.

It is next said, that *when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.* Whenever man, in pursuit of what he calls happiness, or good, separates himself from dependence on his Heavenly Father, by immersing his affections in selfish and worldly love, which is here signified by spending all, he presently finds himself disappointed in the expectations he had formed, and that, instead of the happiness and good which he had looked for, he meets with nothing but distress and misery, which is here signified by a mighty famine in that land, and by beginning to be in want. For the term famine relates not only to a scarcity of bread, or nourishment for the body, but also to a scarcity of what is signified by bread, which is the food of the soul, and which food is nothing else but the divine truth and good of God's Most Holy Word. It is accordingly written, that *man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God* (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).

It is added, that *he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he rather would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat: and no man gave to him.*

By that country is here to be understood the region of selfish and worldly love, with all its follies and cravings; and by a citizen of that country is implied, every one who submits himself to the dominion of such love.

*Swine* denote the lowest principles of selfish and sensual life; and by sending him, therefore, into the fields to feed swine, is to be understood, that he was instructed in no knowledges but what tended to cherish and strengthen such corrupt principles.

His being prepared to fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, instructs us that the knowledges which he had imbibed in this filthy state of his love and affections, and by which he cherished and strengthened the sensual principles of his life, were not sufficient to satisfy his immortal spirit; and, therefore, it is added, that no man gave to him, to instruct us, further, that he was destitute of all light and comfort to be derived from the eternal wisdom, which is here signified by man, and was thus reduced to the level of a beast, as to all limits belonging to true understanding and rationality.

*And when he, came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have*

*bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will, arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.*

By the prodigal coming to himself, we are to understand the return of his affections and thoughts to their proper centre, which had before been wandering amongst objects which had drawn them away from that centre. For this is the case with every thoughtless and unconverted man, that he wanders out of himself, by suffering his affections and thoughts to seek gratification in mere external objects. Whenever, therefore, persons of such a character give way to serious reflection and the admonitions of conscience, they are then said, to come, or return, to themselves, because their affections and thoughts, which properly constitute themselves, so come and return. This seriousness of penitent reflection thus expresses itself in the parable, *How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* For it is made sensible that the children of God alone abound in true peace and comfort, and that in the ways of sin nothing is to be found but a miserable desolation of all true joy. The true penitent, therefore, adds further, *I will arise*, by which is to be understood, an approach and exaltation to the Supreme Good of the Divine Love; *and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants*, implying still further acknowledgement and confession of his natural opposition to the Divine Love, attended with a humble sense of his own deep depravity and unworthiness on that account, together with an earnest desire to be admitted to the lowest place amongst those who are true servants of their Heavenly Father.

The words, *he arose, and came to his father*, express that his will, or love, began to be affected by his understanding and thoughts, for the first conviction of sin is usually worked in the understanding and thoughts, by which man is led to aspire after the good of heavenly love and wisdom; but this good is not attained until the will, or love, begins to be affected, and to be made sensible of the blessedness of that good in itself. When this is the case, then, there is an accomplishment of that which had before been purposed and thought of, and the happy penitent not only says, *I will arise and go to my father*, but really does arise and comes to his Father.

It is written, that *when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him*. By his being *yet a great way off*, is meant that his affections were not yet in a state to enter into conjunction with his Father; for distance, according to the spiritual idea, is determined in all cases by the state of the affections, insomuch that, where the affections of two persons are congenial and in agreement, the persons themselves are near each other; as, on the contrary, where the affections are not in agreement and harmony, the persons themselves are proportionably remote from each other. The case is similar with respect to God and man, so that their distance or remoteness from each other depends altogether on the state of man's affections in respect to God.

The other expressions in this verse denote the different effects and operations of the Divine Mercy, together with the various degrees of its approach to eternal conjunction with every penitent and returning sinner. The first effect is described by seeing him, because God is said to see, as he is said to know, only those whose affections are in some state of agreement with Him. The second effect is described by His having compassion, this being an emotion of the Divine Mercy towards all who begin to feel a want of mercy, and, under the influence of that want, are led to return, in the spirit of sincere penitence, to

the bosom of their Heavenly Father. The third effect is described by running, because by running is signified the strong affection resulting from compassion, and, therefore every one, according to the spiritual idea, is said to run who is under the influence of a strong affection, whether it be good or evil. The fourth effect is described by falling on his neck, because the neck is that part of the body by which communication is effected between the head, or upper region of the body, and the trunk, or lower region. To fall on the neck, therefore, is a figurative way of speaking, to denote communication, and in the present case was intended to express the new communication opened between the Divine Mercy, on the one part, and the heart of a sincere penitent, on the other. The fifth effect is described by kissing him, because a kiss, as every one knows, is a token of conjunction by love, and, therefore, in the present instance, it denotes a further degree of the operation of the Divine Mercy, in conjoining itself by love with the true penitent, and by reciprocally conjoining the true penitent with itself.

We have already seen what is meant by what is written in the next verse, where it is said, *The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* In the two following verses we find, *The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and Let us eat and be merry.*

The father's saying to the servants expresses that he did not do immediately from himself, but mediately by others, the things which are afterwards described. For the subject now recorded concerning the returning penitent, is his instruction in those heavenly truths and doctrines which were to make him wise to salvation; and this instruction is not taught immediately by God, but mediately by His Word, and by the ministers of His Word, who are here, therefore, called servants. According to this view of the meaning of servants bringing forth the best robe and putting it on the returning penitent, expresses in the language of figure, the initiation of the prodigal into the saving knowledges of the eternal truth, which knowledges are as a garment, or robe, for the adorning or protecting of that celestial good of innocence and peace into which he was to be introduced. Putting *a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet*, further describes the conjunction of heavenly good and truth, both in the internal and external man; the ring on the hand denoting this conjunction in the internal man, and the shoes on the feet denoting the same in the external man. Thus both together are expressive of man's regeneration, which is nothing else but man's restoration to the order of heaven in every principle both of his inner and outer man, and thus his conjunction of life with God. By the fatted calf, is further intended to be figured the initiation of the prodigal into the good of celestial love and charity, which good is constantly described in the Word of God under the figure of a fatted calf. By eating and being merry is, lastly, meant to be expressed the heavenly consociation and joy to which the returning penitent never fails to be introduced, when he has put on the best robe, with a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and when the fatted calf has been brought forth and killed. For by eating, according to a spiritual idea, is understood the appropriation of heavenly good, and thus consociation with the angelic heaven; and by being merry, or glad, according to the same idea, is to be understood the delight arising from such appropriation and consociation.

The reason which is here assigned for thus eating and being merry, is given in the following verse, *For this my son was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.*

By the son being dead is meant, being spiritually dead, that is to say, dead in trespasses and sins; for in the Word of God nothing is called death but alienation from the life of

God, that is from the life of love and charity; and nothing is called life but conjunction with God, through a participation of His love. And by the son being lost, is meant his wandering in the ways of error, through ignorance of the eternal truth; for in the Word of God every one is said to be lost who does not follow the guidance of the eternal truth, and suffer himself to be led by its heavenly light to the mansions of eternal day. When, therefore, it is said, that the son was both dead and lost, it denotes that he was deprived both of the good of heavenly love and charity in his will, and also of the truth of heavenly wisdom and intelligence in his understanding. And when it is said, further, that he is alive again, and found, it is to denote that he was beginning to recover from this deprivation, and to be restored to the possession of heavenly life in his will, and of heavenly wisdom in his understanding.

It is said at the close of this verse, that *they began to be merry*. This is to describe the effect of what had been before said, where it is written, let us eat and be merry; thus it is to describe that what was before only in the thought and intention, was now brought into the will and act. This is an usual method of speaking in the Sacred Scriptures, and occurs particularly in the first chapter of Genesis, where mention is so repeatedly made, first, of the divine thought, or purpose, and, next, of its agency and effect, being designed to lead us to reflect on the two distinct processes of regeneration; first, whilst truth is implanting and growing in the understanding; and, secondly, when it enters into the will or love, and is brought into operation and effect.

But it is written afterwards, that *his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing*.

In one sense, by the elder son is here to be understood the Jewish nation, who were envious at, the calling in of the Gentiles to the Christian Church, which Gentiles, agreeably to the same sense, are figured in the parable by the younger son. But in a sense still more remote from the letter, by the elder son, as was observed above, are here to be understood those who stand more in original good, and have not wandered so far from their Father's house in the ways of sin and error.

By his *being in the field* is to be understood, that they who stand more in original good, and have not wandered so far from their Father's house, which is the divine love and mercy, are in an external state of good, when compared with those who are in the good of repentance, which good is here signified by the house in which was heard music and dancing. For when mention is made, in the Sacred Scriptures, of a field and a house, by a house is signified an interior state of good, and by a field an exterior state, comparatively.

Music and dancing, like all other natural expressions, are applied, in the Word of God, to convey spiritual ideas, which is the case, too, with all the various instruments of music spoken of in the Sacred Volume. For all music originates in some spiritual affection, and is expressive of, and attended to excite, the affection in which it originates. And as music is expressive of some spiritual affection, so dancing is expressive of some corresponding natural affection; in other words, dancing is expressive of the agreement between the internal and external man. For dancing, we know, is a motion of the feet in concord, or agreement, with some sound or tune; and as the feet, in consequence of being the lowest part of the body, are representative of the lowest principles of the mind, which are called natural principles, so dancing is representative of the motion, or action of these principles, as they accord with the higher, which are represented by music. It is, therefore, written in the book of Psalms, *Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs* (Psalm 150:4), to denote that man ought to exalt his Maker in all



the affections of his spirit, or internal man, and also in all the actions and energies of his external man, influenced by those affections. By the music, and dancing, then, here spoken of, are to be understood the affections of holy joy arising from the good of repentance, which good is here signified by the house, together with the correspondent delight in the external man, originating in that internal joy.

It is said that *he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant? And he said to him, Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.* By calling one of the servants, and asking what these things meant, is to be understood an inquisition in the minds of those who stand more in original good concerning the joys and delights of the good of repentance; and by asking one of the servants, is to be understood an inquiry in the lower principles of the mind, called rational and scientific, concerning these joys and delights. And by the servant's reply to this inquiry, is further to be understood the assent of those principles to the reasonableness of the superior joys and delights annexed to the good of repentance over the original good. This reasonableness is pointed out in a forcible manner, by the expression, *because he has received him safe and sound*; the term safe having relation to the state of the will in its recovery from disorderly love, to the pure and orderly love of heaven; and the term sound having relation to the state of the understanding, in its restoration from false and erroneous principles of life, to see by the light of the eternal truth and wisdom of the Most High.

It is written, further, that *he was angry and would not go in; therefore came his father out and entreated him.* By anger, and being angry, when the terms occur in the Sacred Scripture, is to be understood contrariety to another, or contrariety of affection; and in this case it denotes the contrariety between the affections of those who stand more in original good, and those who are in the good of repentance; in which sense God is said to be angry with the wicked, not that He feels anything like anger or resentment towards them, but that the good, which constitutes His divine nature, is contrary to the evil which constitutes their natures. The elder brother is, therefore, unwilling to go in, because they who are in original good cannot enter into the joys and delights of those who are in the good of repentance.

By the Father we are here to understand, the divine good of the divine love; and by His coming out and entreating him, is to be understood the influx, or influence, of this love into those who are in original good, inclining them to enter into the joys and delights of those who are in the good of repentance, from the consideration that all such joys and delights originate in the divine love, and are communicated in a more abundant measure to those transgressors who, having wandered from their Father's house in the ways of sin and vanity, are earnest and anxious to return back thither by a vigorous repentance and entire conversion.

But it is said of the elder brother, that, notwithstanding his Father's entreaties, *he answering said to him, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment; and yet you never gave me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this your son has come, who has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* These words, in a subordinate sense, have reference to the Jewish nation, and speak of the reluctance with which they witnessed the extension of the divine mercy and favour to the Gentiles. They are intended also to teach the perverse spirit of that nation, and the undue sense they entertained of their own superior merits and deserts. But, according to a more internal view, the words have reference to the temper

and disposition of those who stand more in original good, and the sense they also cherish of their own unspotted purity, when compared with what they call the defilement of those who are in the good of repentance. All such, therefore, tacitly reproach the Almighty for not giving them a kid to make merry with their friends; in other words, they are indignant at the idea that their joys and delights are not equal to their merits; and thus they charge God foolishly with not giving them a recompense proportioned to their services, not aware that the reward of obedience is always dealt out in an exact measure according to the affection which produced it.

We come now to the Father's reply, *Son, than are ever with me, and all that I have is yours. It was necessary that we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* By the eldest son being ever with his father, is to be understood that they who stand more in original good are ever present with its Divine Source, the Supreme Good; and by all that the Father has being his, is to be understood further that original good contains in it the all of the Supreme good. The Father, therefore, by these words meant to convince His son that he had nothing to complain of because he had all things in his possession by virtue of his conjunction with his Father. And thus He meant to convince those who are more in original good of the blessedness of their state, and that they have no need to envy those who are in the good of repentance, since both original good, and the good of repentance, are in this respect equal; and that each is ever conjoined with the Supreme Good; and that each also contains within itself the all of that Good; thus the all of peace, wisdom, holiness, and blessedness, which all is infinite.

From this parable we learn, in general, the most powerful motives to repentance, and at the same time the nature of that heavenly duty, or in what it principally consists. The motives to repentance are inculcated in the most endearing terms, grounded in the tender mercy of the Almighty, which is here represented as rejoicing more over the returning penitent, than over the sinless and innocent child. And the nature of repentance is taught us by the description here given of the pattern of all true penitents, who makes his return to his Heavenly Father to consist, first, in forsaking the ways of sin and vanity; secondly, in elevating his affections and thoughts to the Supreme Good; and, thirdly, in acknowledging, from the depth of a contrite heart, the greatness and guilt of his transgressions. We are instructed further by this interesting parable, that the beginning of all sin is when man quits the bosom of his Heavenly Father to live in the indulgence of his own will and wisdom, separate from the will and wisdom of God; and that the beginning of all holiness is when man is made sensible of the misery of such a separation, and with his whole heart and soul and mind, labours after a reconjunction of all his purposes, affections, thoughts, and works, with the Divine Source of his life, his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, to shun all the ways of sin and separation from our heavenly Father. But if, notwithstanding all our purposes to lead a good life, we should still in the hour of infirmity fall into transgression, let us yet not despair utterly of the Divine Mercy, but, recollecting its tenderness and compassion towards the humble and the penitent, let us hasten to confess our faults to our Heavenly Father, entreating Him that we may no more offend, but, learning a lesson of wisdom from our faults, may thus attain, by the sincerity of our repentance, to a more full experience and reception of the Divine Mercy than could otherwise have been attained. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE UNJUST STEWARD

Luke 16:1-12.

*There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused to him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said to him, How is it that I hear this of you? give an account of your stewardship; for you may be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord takes away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his Lord's debtors to him, and said to the first, How much owe you to my Lord? And he said, an hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owe you? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill, and write fourscore. And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say to you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

A certain rich man means the Lord himself, as to His Divine Humanity, who is called a rich man, as being the bountiful source of all divine wisdom, truth, and knowledge.

Under the name of steward is described the whole human race, so called from the reception, by each man, of heavenly truth, or knowledge, from God; for such is the case with every one who is born into the world, that he has no truth, or knowledge, but what he derives from another, and, therefore, properly, he is only a receiver of truth, whilst the Lord Himself is the only Real Proprietor; consequently, at his best estate, he is only a steward, whilst the Lord Himself is the only proper Master.

It was said of this steward that *he was accused* to his master *that he had wasted his goods*. The accusation, here spoken of, relates to a state of temptation, or trial, on which occasion man is called to recollection and serious thought concerning his past life, and especially concerning the goods which have been entrusted to him by his heavenly Father, and the use which he has made of those goods. Such a state of trial, or temptation, is always attended by infestations from wicked disorderly spirits, who endeavour to oppress the conscience of man, by aggravating the guilt of his crimes, or of all the disorders of his life, that they may thus separate him from the Divine Mercy, by suggesting the idea that he has sinned beyond the possibility of forgiveness.

All the knowledges of heavenly truth, together with the affection by which they are received, are called goods, and really are goods, and the only goods which properly deserve the name, because they alone tend to lead man to the possession of eternal life and happiness, by effecting his conjunction with the Divine Source of life and happiness. And these goods are said to be wasted, when man either neglects to use them aright, or by

abuse, perverts and rejects them, since in such case the knowledges of truth, even though they had been imparted, and received with affection, are finally taken away from him, since it is an eternal law that man shall have no more knowledge in his understanding than what he is faithful to the practice of, by rendering it subservient to the purification of his will, and the removal thereby of all disorderly love, which separates between him and the Divine Fountain of peace. This, therefore, was the accusation here presented to the mind of the accused steward, that he had frustrated all the purposes of the heavenly knowledge which he had received, and thus made that knowledge void, and of none effect to himself, by not forming his life and love in agreement with its heavenly dictates.

It is written in the parable, that the Lord *called him and said to him*.

The Almighty is said to call man by every dictate of truth manifested in his understanding, and to say to him, when that dictate affects the man's will, so as to excite his affection and attention. The two expressions, therefore, are used, as is common in other parts of the Holy Scripture, for the purpose of pointing out distinctly the two principles of the divine love and wisdom of God, and also the two principles of will and understanding in man adapted to their reception. It is therefore said, *He called him and said to him*, to show, first, that the Almighty regards man from his divine love and divine wisdom conjointly; and to show, secondly, that in the present instance the accused steward was made sensible of the effect of the divine influence both in his will and in his understanding.

The language of the Divine Dictate, in the present case, is thus expressed, *How is it that I hear this of you? give an account of your stewardship; for you may be no longer steward*.

In all states of trial, or temptation, when man is accused by evil spirits in his own conscience, of having been unfaithful to the knowledge communicated to him by his Heavenly Father, there is an internal dictate of heavenly truth leading man to explore the causes of his unfaithfulness, which are necessary to be known before they can be removed. What, therefore, here appears in the letter, in the form of a severe charge, is otherwise in the real spirit and meaning of the words, since according to their internal sense they contain nothing but a dictate of the purest mercy, disposing man to consideration, thus to sincere repentance and newness of life, by discovering to him the hidden sources of his former unfaithfulness and disobedience.

The words, *Give an account of your stewardship*, like the foregoing, in their literal sense, sound like words of censure and of severity, when yet, in their internal and real sense, they are again expressions of the purest mercy, because in that sense they have a tendency again to lead man to recollection, and to take account, in his own mind and life, of the use which he has made of those heavenly goods, which have been entrusted to his care by his Divine Lord and Master. Give an account of your stewardship, is thus a merciful call to every man to explore the hidden principles of his conduct, and thus to ascertain in his own mind in what instances he has been faithful, and in what unfaithful, to divine requirements.

But it is added, *You may be no longer steward*. These words, again, are apparently words of judgement and of terror, thus of severity and incrimination, when yet, in themselves, they are words of the most compassionate mercy, like the foregoing. For by the sentence of apparent condemnation, here delivered, the accused person was intended to be brought into a state of deeper humiliation and contrition, under a feeling sense of his misconduct in the use of his master's goods, and thus of his unworthiness to be entrusted any longer

with the administration of those goods.

It is written afterwards, that *then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord takes away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.*

The words, *what shall I do*, were intended to express a state of internal thought, because it is written, he said within himself; for thought is of two kinds, external and internal, and man is said to think externally, when he thinks only under the influence of self-love and the love of the world, thus under the influence of his external man; but he is said to think internally, when he thinks under the influence of spiritual love, which is the love of God and of his neighbour, thus under the influence of the spirit of that love in his internal man. The accused person, therefore, in the parable, in consequence of the accusations brought against him, and of the spiritual trial thence resulting, was now brought to a state of interior thought, by which he was led to exercise that wisdom which his Lord afterwards commended. From this state of interior thought, therefore, he asks himself the significant question, *what shall I do?* in other words, *what methods shall I take to deliver myself from my present trial, and to guard against the consequences of the accusation brought against me? What those methods are, appears from the following verse in the parable.*

It has been already seen, that the stewardship has relation to the important trust of the eternal truth committed to every one's care, that he may acquire thence the blessing of everlasting life, through the pure love of God and of his neighbour. This stewardship, then, is said to be taken away, when man either perverts or rejects the eternal truth; and it is also said to be taken away, as in the present instance, when man ceases to be led merely by the knowledge of truth in his understanding, in consequence of having attained to that spirit of love and charity to which the truth was intended to lead him; for when this is the case, man is no longer denominated a steward, but rather a friend and child of his Heavenly Father, by reason of his having attained to the great end and design of his stewardship. And that the accused person in the parable had attained to this end, is evident from the words which follow, *I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed.* For these words are manifestly words of humiliation and self-abasement, which tempers of mind are sure symptoms that man is no longer under the influence of selfish and worldly love, but of heavenly and spiritual love.

The digging, here spoken of, is a natural term, which like all other natural terms adopted in the Sacred Scriptures, is expressive of a spiritual idea, and the spiritual idea intended to be expressed by it, is that of inquiry or investigation of truth, since, as the natural man digs in the earth, for the purpose of examining its contents, and discovering its treasures, in like manner the spiritual man is said to dig: in his own understanding, to the intent that he may there examine and finally discover the treasures of the eternal truth which are therein concealed. This, therefore, was the first mark of his humiliation and abasement, that he felt himself unable to examine and explore the mysteries of the eternal wisdom; and the second mark of the same heavenly temper is expressed in these words, *to beg I am ashamed*; by which words is denoted his further inability to apply for spiritual blessings, as is the case with all in a state of trial and temptation, when it appears that heaven is shut against them, and that their prayers for divine favour and acceptance are not heard.

It has been already shown what is meant by being put out of the stewardship, namely, that it denotes a state when man is led no longer of truth, and acts no longer under its influence, but begins to be led of the spirit of heavenly good of love and charity, to which

all truth points, and to which it is intended to conduct its happy receiver. Here, therefore, may be seen clearly what is further to be understood by being received into their houses. For the term house is an expression used in the Sacred Scriptures to denote the interiors of the human mind, together with the ruling principle which prevails there. In the present case, therefore, it is applied to denote the principle of heavenly love and charity, which was to succeed in the place of truth, and to which the man was to be introduced by the state of trial and temptation above mentioned.

The substance of the above resolution is expressed in these words, *So he called every one of his Lord's debtors to him, and said to the first, How much owe you to my Lord?*

This denotes a further state of self-examination, consisting in an exploration of the debt which he owed to his Lord. It is said, every one of his Lord's debtors, as if there were many, (whereas we find afterwards that mention is made only of two) to teach us this lesson of the divine wisdom, that the debts which man owes to his God relate principally to his will and to his understanding, and that these, therefore, are the principles which stand chiefly indebted to the Almighty, the will being created to receive all the good things of his love, whilst the understanding is created to receive all the good things of His wisdom. It is, therefore, on this ground principally that man is a debtor to his Merciful Creator, because all things belonging to him, such as his joys, delights, and happiness, have respect to one or other of the above principles. The question, then, *how much owe you to my Lord?* involves in it an important inquiry respecting every good influence which man has received at any time from his Heavenly Father, and also respecting all the knowledge of heavenly truth which has at any time been imparted to him in an external way through the senses. For the real case is, that every pure delight manifested in the mind of man is from above, or from a source out of himself; in like manner every genuine truth, or knowledge, imparted through the senses, and elevated into the understanding of man, is also from above, and derived from a source out of himself. Until man, however, is brought into a state of recollection and of serious self-examination, he is never able to make this discovery, consequently he makes no return of the immense blessing which he receives everyday from a Divine Hand. The important question, then, *How much owe you to my Lord?* was intended to lead man out of this dreadful state of thoughtlessness and ingratitude to his Divine Benefactor, and to conduct him further to the pure and eternal joy arising from a humble and grateful acknowledgement of divine mercies and favours.

The debt and its payment, which are the principle subjects of this parable, are next described. *And he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owe you? and he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill, and write fourscore.*

The debt is here expressed by two distinct terms, *a hundred measures of oil*, and *a hundred measures of wheat*, because the expression, a hundred measures of oil, has more relation to the good things of celestial love stored up in the human will, whilst the other expression, a hundred measures of wheat, has more relation to the good things of heavenly wisdom, or truth, stored up in the human understanding. For every man, from the first moment of his birth, to the last moment of his existence here below, is perpetually receiving from God these precious gifts in his will and in his understanding, whether he is aware of it or not; and these gifts are described in the Sacred Scriptures under figurative terms, taken from the most valuable and beneficial subjects of natural life, as in the present instance from oil and wheat. Accordingly, we find that both oil and wheat are used, under the Jewish law, to express spiritual blessings, which are the

blessings of heavenly love and wisdom, to which all spiritual things have reference. In the prophetic writings also the same figurative language, we find, is perpetually adopted, insomuch that there is no subject in the visible creation, which is not regarded in this, its representative character, and thus introduced to express some spiritual grace, or virtue, to which it corresponds.

It is said in both cases that the measure was a hundred, because a hundred is a term applied in the Scriptures throughout to denote what is complete and full, and, therefore, it is here applied by our Lord to the measures of oil and of wheat here spoken of, inasmuch as these measures are in every sense full and complete with every individual, since every individual, as was above observed, is continually receiving those inestimable gifts from the Father of Mercies.

The discharge of the debt is expressed by what is said in one case, *Take your bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty*; and in the other case, *Take your bill, and write fourscore*. The true meaning of this discharge cannot be clearly and fully comprehended but from a right understanding of the signification of numbers, as they are applied in the Word throughout, and particularly of the numbers fifty and fourscore, which are here applied in the parable. For that numbers have a spiritual signification is evident from the application of them in every part of the Sacred Scriptures. Thus it must be obvious to the most careless reader, that the numbers two, three, five, seven, ten, twelve, and twenty, are applied according to some spiritual idea, and can only be understood in reference to that idea. On the same ground, the numbers fifty and fourscore are here applied in the parable, because the number fifty, like the number a hundred, of which it is the half, denotes what is full and complete, and, therefore, is here used by our blessed Lord to denote a full and complete discharge of the debt; and the number fourscore, like the number forty, of which it is the double, denotes a state of trial and temptation, as is plain from our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, the duration of which was forty days, and also from the sojourning of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the duration of which was forty years. The discharge of the debt, therefore, is described by these numbers, to denote, that when, by self-examination and serious exploration of the interiors of his own mind, man is fully convinced of the immense debt which he owes to his Merciful Creator, and is brought into the humble and grateful desire of paying it, the Almighty is pleased to accept this conviction and desire as a full discharge of the debt, but yet with the condition, that man shall pass through the several states of trial and purification necessary to wean him from his natural self-love, that so he may finally be brought into the humble, thankful acknowledgement, that all the gifts which he has received, both in his will and in his understanding; in other words, all the good things of love and charity, together with all the blessings of wisdom and knowledge, are the perpetual gifts of a gracious and indulgent Mercy, without which he would have no sense whatever either of goodness or of wisdom, consequently, no sense of true happiness either here or hereafter.

It is written, that the Lord *commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world, are in their generation wiser than the children of light*.

The action, in this case, is only apparently unjust, whilst viewed according to the sense of the letter; but in reality it was just, and must be deemed just, when viewed according to the spiritual sense of the parable; because in agreement with that sense it is the operation of the divine wisdom in man, leading him to the full acknowledgement of the immense debt which he owes to his merciful Creator, and to the adoption of such measures as were necessary for its discharge. The Lord, therefore, does not commend the steward for his

injustice, because he had not really been guilty of any act of injustice, but he commends him, because he had done wisely; in other words, because he had done what heavenly wisdom dictated as proper to be done under his circumstances.

Moreover, it can never be true, that the children of this world are in reality wiser than the children of light. The children of this world are such as are intent on securing the apparent goods of this world, in which attempt they exercise a prudence, in some respects apparently superior to the prudence exercised by the children of light in the attainment of their object. The Lord, therefore, would teach us, by the above words, to imitate the prudence and circumspection of the natural man in his concerns, on all occasions, relative to the concerns of the spiritual man. Thus the spiritual man should suffer himself to be instructed by the natural man, and to apply the prudential methods by which he secures his temporal interests, as a rule for the regulation of conduct in regard to the security of the higher interests of eternity. It is according to this view, that the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, reproves the madness of the prophet (Numb. 22:22-31; 2 Pet. 2:16), because the dumb ass is a figure of the scientific principle of the natural man, or of the wisdom of the children of this world; whilst the prophet is a figure equally striking of the wisdom of the spiritual man, who may be, and is intended to be, improved and perfected by an attention to the prudence and circumspection of the lower principles of scientific knowledge.

The words, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when you fail, they may receive you, into everlasting habitations*, cannot be understood until it be first known what is meant by the mammon of unrighteousness, and what by making friends of that mammon. Now the mammon of unrighteousness may be understood in two senses; first, as relating to worldly wealth, for by mammon is meant wealth, or riches; and, secondly, as relating to spiritual wealth, or the riches of the mind, or spirit; and in both these senses the precept, which inculcates the duty of making to ourselves friends of it, is most important. For, in regard to the natural sense of the term mammon, it is of the greatest concern to man to make natural wealth his friend, and not his enemy, and this blessed effect is produced whenever man applies his natural wealth to the beneficent purposes for which it is given him by his merciful Creator, such as the purposes of providing for the comforts, and promoting the happiness of all those with whom he is connected in civil society. But the duty is still more interesting, when regarded in its application to spiritual wealth, or to the riches of the mind, spirit, of man; which riches consist in the knowledges of what is good and of what is true, as communicated in the revelation of the Most High. For that such knowledges are to be regarded in the light of spiritual wealth, is evident from our Lord's other parables, where he compares them, in one instance, with pounds, and, in another instance, with talents, that is to say, with money. It is remarkable, too, that there is the most exact agreement between this spiritual money, or riches, and natural wealth, since natural wealth, we know, is for the purpose of procuring the comforts and necessaries of natural life, and is of no use whatsoever unless it be so applied. This is exactly the case, too, with the knowledges of what is good and true, which are here spiritually understood by the mammon of unrighteousness, since, if those knowledges are not applied to the purpose of procuring the comforts and necessaries of spiritual life, they likewise are of no manner of use or service whatsoever.

Here, therefore, it may be seen what is meant, in this latter sense, by making to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. For if the knowledges of what is good and true are not applied to the blessed purposes for which they are given, namely, to promote



our purification and regeneration, by replenishing us more and more with the love of God and of our neighbour, and by thus delivering us from the deadly evils of selfish and worldly love, they then become our greatest enemies, being the cause of all our condemnation and misery. On the other hand, if we are careful to apply those knowledges according to the above purposes for which they were given, they then become our best friends, because they are the mediums, under the Divine Providence, of opening to us the gates of heaven, and of introducing us into the societies of the ever blessed, by first purifying our hearts and lives from all our natural evils, and restoring in us the blessed, image of the divine love, wisdom, purity, and peace. It is an eternal law, therefore, stamped on the above knowledges, that they must become either man's greatest friends, or greatest enemies; since if man forms his life in agreement with them, they promote his eternal salvation; whereas if he is careless in the application of them, they then as certainly increase his condemnation, according as it is written, *He that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many blows.*

The meaning of the concluding words, *That when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*, is plain, from what has been already said of the mammon of unrighteousness, and of the duty of making to ourselves friends of that mammon. For in the application of this mammon, according to its natural sense, as relating to worldly wealth, it is evident that this wealth may be rendered instrumental, under the Divine Providence, in securing to man an everlasting habitation in the Kingdom of Heaven, provided that he applies it in agreement with the purposes and counsels of the Most High. The same is true, likewise, concerning the above mammon as understood according to its spiritual sense, since it has been already seen, that by the knowledges of what is good and true, if man be faithful in their application, he attains to purification from his natural evils, and also to a participation of the divine spirit of heavenly love and wisdom; consequently, he is received into an everlasting habitation, since every advancement in purification of life, through the admittance of heavenly and eternal principles of holy love and wisdom, is ever attended with the blessed effect of introducing man into heavenly societies, inasmuch as there is every reason to believe, that man's progress in the regeneration is a progress also into the mansions of bliss and purity, and into association with the angelic inhabitants of those mansions, according as it is written, *The angel of the Lord camps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them; and, again, He shall give, his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*

It is written, further, *he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.*

To be *faithful in that which is least*, is to be faithful to the first manifestation of heavenly truth, or knowledge, in the mind, which is then called the least; because at that time, like the grain of mustard-seed, it is the least of all seeds, but presently, in proportion as man becomes faithful to it, by renouncing the evils which it makes manifest, it becomes much; in other words, it becomes a great tree, so that, as it is written in another parable, the birds of heaven lodge in the branches of it.

To be *unjust in the least*, here means not to be faithful to the first manifestations of heavenly truth in the understanding; in other words, not to renounce and depart from those natural evils which the truth so manifested points out as mischievous and destructive. And he who is thus unjust in the least, must, of course, be unjust also in much, because he not only destroys in himself the first manifestation of heavenly truth, or knowledge, but,

likewise, all the products, or fruits, intended by that manifestation, that is to say, all the graces and virtues of heavenly love and life, and thus all the blessings and comforts of the heavenly kingdom.

It is added, *If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

By the true riches is to be understood internal truth, or truth internally received, and thus in connection with its good, that is to say, with Jesus Christ, His life, His love, and His kingdom. Jesus Christ, therefore, would teach us by the above significant question, that this internal truth will never be communicated to us, only in the degree in which we are faithful to external truth, or to truth externally received, as all truth is in its first manifestation. Hence, Jesus Christ would lead us to consider the vast importance of being faithful to the first impressions of heavenly truth imparted through the senses, since without such faithfulness it is impossible ever to attain to the blessing of internal truth, and thus to conjunction of life and and love with our Heavenly Father.

It is, lastly, added, *If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

All truth, at its first manifestation in the human mind, is said to be another man's, because he to whom it is manifested has not as yet made it his own, by incorporating it into his life, or love, and thus admitting it, not on the authority of another only, but on its own authority, by being made sensible in his own mind of its divine origin, and of the divine blessing to which it conducts, and with which it is in connection. When Jesus Christ, therefore, proposes the question on this occasion, Who shall give you that which is your own? He meant to teach us this important lesson, that heavenly truth can never be fully incorporated into our lives, only so far as we love it, and delight in it, and thus make it our own. He would, therefore, teach us, further, that truth is not our own, merely because we assent to it with our understanding, and confirm its external evidences, since if it goes no further than our understanding it is in such case another man's, and not properly our possession. But it becomes our own by living according to it, and thus seeing and holding it in connection with that Divine Being from whom it continually proceeds, and with all that host of beings and of blessings to which it was intended to conduct us.

We learn from this parable the very interesting wisdom to know how to conduct ourselves when we are brought into trial or temptation, concerning our Heavenly Father's goods which He has entrusted to our care, but which we have wasted. We learn further the very important wisdom of being faithful to the first manifestations of truth in our own mind and conscience, by renouncing those natural evils which the truth was intended both to make manifest and to control. We are instructed yet further, that we can never hope to attain all the blessings proffered to our acceptance by the Eternal Truth, only so far as we make it our own, by incorporating it fully into our life and love. Let us resolve, therefore, in future, whenever we are called to account respecting our stewardship, to enter into a serious examination of ourselves, concerning the use we have made of that knowledge which has been imparted to us by our Heavenly Father, that so we may no longer be called a waster of His goods, but, by making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, may finally be received into the everlasting habitations of rest and peace, reserved for all those who have been faithful in that which is least, and who have thus attained to the true riches; also for those who have been faithful in that which is another man's, and thus have had imparted to them that which is their own. Amen.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

Luke 16:19-31.

*There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham,, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there. Then he said, I pray you, therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham says to him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.*

*A certain rich man*, in a restricted or historical sense, here designates the Jewish nation; but in a more extended or spiritual sense it means all who are in possession of the knowledges of revealed truth, or the Word of God, and who are, therefore, said to be clothed in purple and fine linen; purple denoting more the good of that Word, and fine linen its truth; they are further described, as faring sumptuously every day, to denote that, on all occasions, they have the opportunity of incorporating into their lives those heavenly and eternal principles.

The *beggar named Lazarus*, in a restricted or historical sense, denotes the Gentiles, who are called beggars, because they were not in possession of the Eternal Truth, like the Jews; but in a more extended or spiritual sense, by the beggar, here mentioned, are to be understood all who are without the knowledge of revealed truth, and yet are in the desire of that knowledge. All these are said to be laid at the rich man's gate, because they are in the affection of truth, and desirous to enter into the possession of it: they are also described as being full of sores, inasmuch as being destitute of the Eternal Truth, they are infested with false principles and persuasions, which are in many cases contrary to the truth: they are again described as *desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table*, since being in the affection or love of truth, they wish to be fed or nourished by it in all the virtues and graces of a pure and holy life. And, lastly, it is said of them, that *the dogs came and licked their sores*, to denote their association with those who, from a state of natural good, were desirous of preventing the perversion of truth, and thus of restoring them to the health and strength of divine life and order.

It is said in the parable, that *the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into*

*Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.*

Dying means removal from a natural state of life into a spiritual state of life; and being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom means, introduction to eternal happiness in that state, for, by Abraham is here manifestly meant the Lord, as in other passages of the Sacred Scriptures; and by his bosom is therefore meant the divine love, with all the blessedness which it communicates. The beloved disciple John was therefore said to lie in the Lord's bosom, because he was principled in heavenly love and charity, and in all the good works to which they give birth.

The rich man dying, denotes his removal also from a natural state of life into a spiritual state of life; but inasmuch as, from the history of this rich man, it is manifest that he was principled in knowledge, but not in the life of knowledge, which is love and charity, therefore, it is said that he was buried, to denote that all his knowledge perished with him, this being the case with all those who have their understandings enlightened by the Eternal Truth, whilst their wills remain unpurified through a criminal neglect of the application of that truth to the purposes for which it was given. In the same view, it is written of the unfaithful servant, who had neglected to improve his talent, *take from him the talent, and give it to him that has ten talents*. It is added, that *in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*.

By hell is to be understood a state of separation from everything that is wise and good, thus from the divine presence of the Most High; and by his lifting up his eyes in this state, being in torments, is further to be understood the man's thought or reflection about his state, in consequence of the misery and wretchedness in which he found himself. It is, therefore, added, that he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, to denote that he perceived his distance and separation from the Lord himself, signified by Abraham, and from all the consolations of his mercy and love, signified by Lazarus in his bosom.

But it is further written, that *he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*. It may be asked how the rich man's prayer for divine mercy can be reconciled with the fact of his continuing in torment, since it is reasonable to suppose that his prayer would be heard by the Father of Mercies, and that relief from torment would be afforded accordingly.

This difficulty can only be removed by supposing what seems to have been really the case, that the rich man's prayer, on this occasion, did not proceed from any good desire grounded in a sense of the divine love and mercy, but from his present torment, and that consequently it was the prayer of compulsion, not of freedom, and therefore could not be granted, since the Almighty is affected by no prayers, and hears none, but what proceed from perfect freedom, which freedom is the result of the operation of divine mercy and love in the penitent and obedient bosom.

The reason why the rich man petitions that Lazarus may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue, can only be seen from the consideration of what is here to be understood by water, and by cooling the tongue; from which it will be manifest, that by water is meant truth, which the rich man, in his life time, had been accustomed to pervert and falsify, and that this was the ground of his present petition, that he might still be allowed the satisfaction in which he had before indulged, of perverting and falsifying the truth, and thus of cooling his tongue. For by the tongue of this rich man is to be understood the power or faculty of thus perverting and falsifying all the knowledges of

truth which he had admitted into his understanding, and since he was no longer permitted to exercise this power or faculty, therefore he says, *I am tormented in this flame*. By the flame, however, here spoken of, is not literally to be understood the flame arising from a common fire, as in this world, but the flame of this rich man's craving, which was nothing else but the infernal lust of continuing to pervert and falsify all heavenly truth, as he had been accustomed to do in the life of the body.

It is written, further, that *Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and you are tormented*.

The good things which the rich man is here said to have received, are not real good things, but apparent good things, or such as appeared good at the time to the man himself, on which account they are called your good things. For such is the difference between real good things and apparent good things, that the former are what man receives, not from himself merely, but from the Giver of all good, with whom also the receiver connects them, acknowledging them with gratitude to be the gifts of his mercy; whereas apparent good things are those which man separates from the Divine Giver, and thus calls his own, independent of the mercy from which he received them. The like is true of the evil things which Lazarus is said to have received, inasmuch as evil things, like good things, are both real and apparent; real evils being such as man brings upon himself by separating his love and affection, consequently his thoughts and persuasions, from the Source of all good, whilst apparent evil things are of an external nature, being such as are permitted of the Divine Providence to afflict even those who are in the real desire of turning away from all evil, and who, consequently, in the end, obtain deliverance from all evil. It is therefore added, *now he is comforted, and you are tormented*, to instruct us, that all who have received apparent evil things in the present life are admitted in the life after death to a participation and enjoyment of real goods; whilst they, who in the life of the body have received only apparent good things, are deprived of those blessings after separation from the body, and are plunged into real evil things, in consequence of a separation from all real good of heavenly love and life.

But Abraham adds, *Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from there*.

This great gulf describes the barrier of eternal separation between one kingdom and the other, which is of such a nature as to render it impossible for the inhabitants of the happy kingdom to become inhabitants of the miserable kingdom, and likewise for the inhabitants of the miserable kingdom to become inhabitants of the happy kingdom. This gulf, it is possible, may be passed by man during his abode in this world, and every man in reality does pass it according to the determination of his free-will, whether it incline to good or evil. But it is well to be considered and understood, that when man quits the terrestrial body and enters into the spiritual or eternal world, his lot is then irrevocably fixed, nor is it possible for him then to change the ruling love which he has acquired by the exercise of his freedom here below. It is, therefore, said, *so that they who would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from there*, to instruct all mankind in this important truth, that the present life is allowed them for the purpose of fixing their eternal destination, and that every one, therefore, has it now in his power either to become a blessed angel, to live for ever happy amongst kindred angels, or to become a miserable infernal, to take up his eternal abode amongst the spirits of darkness.

It is further written of the rich man, that he said, *I pray you, therefore, Father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

By the father's house and five brethren are to be understood, all those who are spiritually rich, or who abound in the knowledges of truth, but yet are in evil of life, in consequence of not applying those knowledges to the purifying purposes for which they were imparted.

It appears at first sight that the rich man, in this instance, was principled in good-will and charity, since he was desirous of preventing others from being exposed to the same misery with himself.

In reality, however, his petition was not grounded in charity, but in self-love, or a desire to prevent the increase of his own torment. For as in the kingdom of the blessed, every increase of its inhabitants is an addition to the bliss of each individual, so in the kingdom of the miserable there is reason to suppose that every increase of its inhabitants adds both to the general misery, and to that of every individual. On any other principle it is difficult to account for the anxiety here expressed by the rich man to prevent his brethren coming to the same place of torment with himself.

It is written, in the conclusion, that *Abraham said to him, they have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead, they would repent, And he said to him, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.*

We learn from these words that the revelation of the eternal truth in the Word of God is the only source of genuine faith, or of a right belief in God and in the great realities of His kingdom; and that if men do not suffer themselves to be persuaded by the evidence of truth itself, they will not be persuaded by any other evidence or testimony whatsoever. We learn, therefore, further, that it is a groundless imagination to suppose that men may be converted to a right faith and a corresponding life by visions, by miracles, or by any other extraordinary interposition whatsoever, since if a right faith and a corresponding life could be effected by these means, there is every reason to suppose that the Divine Mercy would not fail to apply them for that salutary purpose. We learn, therefore, lastly, that in order to effect our conversion to God, and our full belief in the realities of his kingdom, we ought to study well the pages of the eternal truth, which contain all possible fullness of evidence and demonstration.

This parable teaches us how great is the temptation to which we are exposed from the possession of riches, whether they be natural or spiritual, since, in either case, if they are not rightly applied, they may become injurious to our eternal happiness. Not that it is to be understood that a rich man, whether in a natural or spiritual view, is excluded from the kingdom of heaven, any more than a poor man, or that poverty is a surer introduction to heaven than riches. It is only to be understood that the abuse of riches, and especially of spiritual riches, which are the knowledges of truth, is in all cases, dangerous. We learn, therefore, especially from this parable, to be upon our guard in respect to the use of spiritual riches, that so we may always apply the knowledge of the eternal truth, which we have received, to the purposes of purification and real reformation of heart and life. Lastly, we are taught where to look for the proper evidence of things invisible, and that it is only to be found in the Word of God itself, or in the testimony of the eternal truth. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, no longer to abuse the knowledge which we have received, either by perversion or misapplication; and let us further resolve never to

indulge the foolish imagination that our conversion may be worked either by visions, by signs, or even by miracles, but rather to look for that highest of all testimonies respecting the eternal world which God has vouchsafed to communicate in His Holy Word, and which, if rightly cherished in the understanding, in the will, and in the life, will not fail, finally, to produce an evidence amounting to demonstration. Amen.



# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE SERVANT PLOUGHING OR FEEDING CATTLE.

Luke 17:7-10.

*But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say to him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to eat? and will not rather say to him. Make ready with what I may dine, and gird yourself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward you shall eat and drink? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trust not. So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.*

The two kinds of servants here distinguished by Jesus Christ include all the members of His church, who are, according to the spiritual idea, either ploughmen or shepherds; since the term ploughmen involves in it all those who are preparing themselves for the reception and growth of the seed of the Word of God, which is the eternal truth; whilst the term shepherds involves in it all those who cherish the good which this seed produces, that so it may come to its full maturity. A spiritual ploughman, therefore, is one who is more concerned about the cultivation of his understanding and its improvement in heavenly knowledge; whilst the spiritual shepherd is one who is more concerned about the cultivation of his will, and its consequent improvement in the graces of heavenly love and charity. Jesus Christ, therefore, distinguishes between these two characters, because it is of importance, and of the first importance, that they should be distinguished, to the intent that the members of His church may examine themselves accordingly, and may thus be enabled to discover their several characters, and in what state they stand in regard both to the insemination and fruitfulness of the eternal truth in their own minds and lives.

The servant is described as *coming from the field*. By the field, here spoken of, is to be understood both the will and the understanding of man, because these two faculties were created to receive and to cherish the good and truth of the Word of God, and to be formed accordingly; and to come from this field is an expression to denote the cessation of spiritual labour, whether it relate to the will or the understanding, and thus to denote a state of entrance into that rest, to which all spiritual labour is intended to conduct, which rest is no other than the termination of all spiritual conflict, and an admission to that blessed peace which is always the result of spiritual victory, and of conjunction thus acquired with the supreme good and supreme truth.

It is intimated in the parable, that this servant, when coming from the field, should not immediately go and sit down to eat, but should rather make ready with what his master may dine, and gird himself, and serve his master till he has eaten and drunken, and afterward he might eat and drink.

This intimation is grounded in the greatest depths of the divine wisdom, which is continually inculcating the edifying lesson, that before man spiritually sits down to eat; in other words, before he can appropriate to himself heavenly good and truth, and thus enter into the rest of everlasting peace and bliss, he must first prepare himself for the communication and enjoyment of all these blessings; which preparation consists in doing what is here expressed in the parable, where it is said, *Make ready with what I may dine,*

*and gird yourself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken.*

The first injunction, *Make ready with what I may dine*, has reference spiritually to the implantation of truths, or the knowledges of heavenly things in the human mind, on which things the Lord is said to dine, agreeably to His own declaration in the Revelations, where He says, *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he with me* (Rev. 3:20). For such is the nature of man's conjunction with the Lord, that it cannot be effected without the knowledges of truth, nor can it be effected by those knowledges alone, without the love and life of truth, which love and life is from the Lord. Thus man's conjunction with the Lord is the result of the conjunction of the love and life of truth with the truth itself; in which case the Lord is said to dine with man, and man with the Lord, because the Lord's love joins itself with the knowledges of truth in man's understanding, whilst the knowledges of truth in man's understanding reciprocally join themselves with the Lord's love and life, and thus is effected at heavenly marriage, together with its feast, in which the Lord delights Himself with entering into His own in man; and man, in his turn, delights himself with entering mutually, by means of the knowledges of truth, into an everlasting conjunction with, and enjoyment of, all the good things of the Lord's love and life. The first preparation, therefore, for man's entrance into the rest of eternal blessedness, is to make ready with what the Lord may dine; in other words, to store up in his understanding the knowledges of heavenly truth from the Holy Word, with a view to their final conjunction with the Lord's love and life.

As the first injunction relates to the insemination of truth in the human understanding, so the second injunction, *Gird yourself*, relates to the effect of that insemination on the human will. For the girding, here spoken of, has respect to the love and its affections, being expressive of their separation from mere worldly, selfish, and sensual ends of life, and of their being gathered up and directed towards an eternal end, which end is nothing else but conjunction with the Supreme good and Supreme truth. Frequent mention is accordingly made of girdles and of girding in the Sacred Scriptures, both as applied to the Lord himself and to His children. Thus it is written of the Lord himself, that *justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins* (Isaiah 11:5), to denote that His love and affections, as to His humanity, were always directed upwards, and under the influence of the Divine good, as His thoughts were always directed towards, and under the influence of, the Divine truth. And thus his children are enjoined by Him to have their *loins girded about* (Luke 12:35); or, as it is expressed by the Apostle, to have their *loins girt about with truth* (Ephes. 6:14), to denote that their love and affections should also be directed upwards, and gathered out of all folly and transgression to an eternal conjunction with the Divine Father and Fountain of all life and peace.

As the two first injunctions relate, one to the insemination of truth, and the other to its operation on the love and affections, so the third, *Serve me till I have eaten and drunken*, relates to its operation on the conduct or conversation of man in his exchange with his fellow-creatures, or in the discharge of relative duties, and in the fulfillment of those uses and good services to which he is called of the Divine Providence in that station of life in which he is placed. For this is the end both of the insemination of truth, and of its effect on the love, that man should be brought into a state of entire submission to the Divine will and Providence, so as to become a willing subject or servant for the accomplishment of divine purposes, and more especially for the fixation of the principles of thought and affection in useful works, agreeably to those other words of Jesus Christ, where He says

to His disciples, *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained [or arranged] you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John 15:16). For by bringing forth fruit, is here signified the production of heavenly love and charity in the human will; and by this fruit remaining, is further denoted the descent of those heavenly principles into the actions or operations of the external man, where they become fixed and permanent, and acquire a body, in the useful and profitable works of a well-regulated life. It is added, *Till I have eaten and drunken*, to denote that, when the principles of love and charity, in the internal man, are fixed and rendered permanent by good works in the external, the Lord, in such case, takes entire possession of the whole man, and partakes in all the joys derived from the perception of his own love and wisdom manifested and operative in the human will and understanding.

It is added, *and then you may eat and drink*. These words are intended to instruct us, that man is not allowed to enter into the enjoyment of any celestial good, or into the delight of any spiritual truth, only so far as he first acknowledges, in heart and life, that every such good and truth is derived solely from the Lord, and is the gift of His bountiful and unmerited mercy, and in proportion as, by humility and submission, he allows the Divine Giver to enter first into the enjoyment and delight of all His gifts. For until this is the case man must of necessity separate those gifts from their Divine fountain, and, in so doing, must of course separate himself from that fountain, and, consequently, from all heavenly enjoyment, peace, and blessedness, which can only be tasted in their fullness, so far as man is wise to connect himself with his Maker, and with all the good things of His mercy and love.

In the application of this parable, the Lord proposes the following interesting question, *Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?* to which he gives the following answer, *I trust not;* and then delivers the following precept, *So likewise you, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do,*

We learn from the above question and answer, and from the annexed precept, that no action of ours has any merit in it, only so far as it is done under the divine influence of our Heavenly Father, and thus under the humble, grateful acknowledgement, that He is the real doer of it, whilst all that we can do is to co-operate with His divine grace and mercy. We learn, further, that we ought always to consider ourselves merely as co-operators with our God and Saviour, in all our thoughts, words, and works, agreeably to His own declaration, where He says, *Without me you can do nothing*. Thus we ought to refer all our talents, with their operation, to the Divine bounty which bestows them, and tremble at the idea of ascribing any glory to ourselves when it is due solely to the Lord our Redeemer.

This parable teaches us to regard ourselves as called to the infinite honour and happiness of being servants of the Most High, and that in this character we have to act in the double capacity of a ploughman and a shepherd; in other words, as we are gifted both with an understanding and a will, and that our understanding was given us for the insemination and cultivation of all heavenly truth, as our will was given us for the reception and fruit-fullness of all the heavenly good of love and charity. In the next place, we are taught, that in the fulfillment of these important duties, we are bound, first, to regard the divine will and pleasure of our Heavenly Father, by preparing in ourselves a suitable habitation for His Holy Spirit of love and wisdom, that so He may take delight in the abode of His own preparing, and in the heavenly principles with which He furnishes that abode. We are

instructed, yet further, that it is the will of our Heavenly Father, that we ourselves may then enter into the full enjoyment of those principles, and of all the happiness to which they give birth, whenever we are wise, humbly, and gratefully to acknowledge them to be His gifts for our bliss and salvation. Lastly, we learn, that under every advancement in the reception of goodness and of truth from above, and in all their operation, we ought to ascribe all the praise and glory to Him to whom it properly belongs, and still account ourselves unprofitable servants, because we can never rise to any higher honour than to become a fellow-worker, or co-operator, with the Omnipotent in the important concerns of our salvation and bliss. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on to endeavour to discharge all our duties, whether those of a spiritual ploughman, or of a spiritual shepherd, with the greatest zeal and alacrity, as if everything depended on ourselves, but after all to acknowledge, in humility, that of ourselves we can do nothing, and that we owe everything, whether it relate to the knowledge of truth in the understanding, to the reception of good in the will, or to the operation of both in our words and works, to the free grace and mercy of the Divine Parent and Fountain of all truth, of all good, of all peace, and of all salvation, to whom be the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE UNJUST JUDGE.

Luke 18:1-8.

*And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to give up; saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night to Him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*

In the sense of the letter, by the city is meant a city, by the judge a judge, and by the widow a widow, who applies to the judge to be avenged of her adversary, or of some one who had done her injury. But in the spiritual sense, by the city, here spoken of, is to be understood the doctrine of the church; and by the judge, the false principles and persuasions which prevailed in that doctrine, for it is said of him, that he feared not God, neither regarded man, intimating that he was void of all love and charity; and by the widow are to be understood those in the church who are in the desire of truth, from a principle of simple good, and from a conviction that without truth they can have no power against their spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

It is written of the judge, when he was applied to by the widow to avenge her of her adversary, that *he would not for a while*. In the sense of the letter this means, that either through carelessness or disinclination, the judge delayed to grant the widow's request; but according to the spiritual idea, it denotes the delay and difficulty attending the subjugation of evil, and the powers of darkness, whilst man is under the influence of false principles and persuasions, and is thus in darkness respecting the eternal truth.

But it is added, that *afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me*. According to the sense of the letter, it would appear from these words, that the unjust judge granted the widow's request merely for the purpose of saving himself the trouble of repeated solicitation. But under this literal sense of the above words is concealed a spiritual or internal sense, as in all other parts of the parable, which spiritual or internal sense teaches the certain prevalence of prayer, or holy desire, though it is not accompanied with the knowledge of heavenly truth, but, on the contrary, is immersed in the darkness of mistaken and false opinions. Jesus Christ, therefore, would instruct us, by this part of the parable, that every pure and upright desire of the humble and the penitent is sure, sooner or later, to obtain the redress of all its grievances, by being enlightened with that saving wisdom which has in it eternal life and salvation. He would teach us also a lesson of patience, and not to be discouraged, though our prayers are not immediately granted, nor our desires immediately gratified.

The Lord makes the application of the parable in these words: *Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night to Him, though He*

*bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

He would thus teach us, in the first place, to attend well to what the unjust judge says; in other words, to reflect continually in our own minds on the blessed and certain effects of importunate prayer, arising out of penitent, humble, and converted hearts, though it be not enlightened by the bright light of the Eternal Truth. And in the second place, He would instruct us concerning the superior prevalence of such holy prayer when it is so enlightened. For by the term God is here to be understood the divine truth, as by the term Lord is to be understood the divine good from whence the divine truth proceeds. By the elect also are meant those of the Church who are principled in heavenly good and charity; and by avenging them, is denoted the redress of all their grievances, and the removal of all evil, through the illumination of that eternal truth to which they apply themselves, and their everlasting conjunction with all its brightness and its blessing.

The expression *day* and *night*, includes every state of the mind, whether it be in light or in darkness, in consolation or in trouble; and therefore Jesus Christ would teach us by this expression, that our prayers to Him are of the same prevalence, and equally affect Him, whether they be attended with light and consolation to ourselves, or otherwise. Thus he would instruct us to pray alike, and not to give up, both in adversity and prosperity, in sorrow and in joy, when we are distressed through the want of heavenly light, and when we are gladdened which its abundance.

By the term *speedily*, according to the internal sense of the expression, is to be understood *certainly*, because the internal sense has no relation to time, but to the state of the thing treated of. Jesus Christ, therefore, by these apparently contradictory words, would instruct us, that all our sincere prayers will certainly be heard, and all our pure desires will certainly be granted, notwithstanding the appearance of delay on the part of our Heavenly Father, who converts even that delay into the means of our purification, by leading us to a deeper sense of our own wants and unworthiness, and thus to a more grateful sense of His mercies, when our requests are granted.

The parable concludes with these remarkable words, which seem to have no connection with it, *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*

The coming of the Son of Man means the revelation or manifestation of Divine Truth from God out of Heaven, for the instruction and salvation of His Church, or people, which revelation or manifestation, according to the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, is to take place in the latter days, and is pointed at more especially by the descent of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, here upon earth, to be the tabernacle of God with men. Jesus Christ, therefore, would instruct us, by the above significant question, to take heed to the state of our hearts and lives, that when the Son of Man shall appear, or, in other words, when Divine Truth shall be revealed or made manifest, we may be found in a suitable disposition to receive it, neither overlooking it through carelessness, nor rejecting it through the wickedness of our lives.

Jesus Christ would teach us, then, in this parable, that He is present in every good desire of our hearts, and though this desire may not be attended with the light of truth at its first commencement, yet if we continue patiently to cherish it, and to keep it open to its Divine Source, it will assuredly, sooner or later, through the Divine Omnipotence, deliver us from all error of false doctrine and opinion, and conduct us to the bright light of the Eternal truth. He would teach us, yet further, that His apparent delay in granting our petitions is no ground of discouragement, but quite the contrary, since by that delay, if we

are faithful to it, our purification is promoted, because our humiliation and dependence on God are rendered more absolute. Lastly, He would intimate to us, that this state of pure desire, and of devout humiliation and dependence, is the best possible state to prepare us for that promised Second Advent of the Son of Man, which the Scriptures announce to us, and which is to consist in a brighter display of heavenly truth to the Church, or people, of God, at a time when, through the influence of false doctrines, and more especially through the prevalence of evil love and corrupt affections, mankind shall have lost all just apprehension of the proper sense of the Sacred Scriptures, all true knowledge of God, and of the ways of salvation, and must thus perish everlastingly, unless the Word of God be again opened to their understandings in the power and brightness of that saving truth, of which it is the only proper source and fountain. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR.

Luke 18:9-14.

*And He spoke this parable to certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

According to the sense of the letter, by going up into the temple to pray, is meant the going up into a building of wood and stone consecrated to the service of God, to perform in it sacred worship, such as is acceptable to God; but according to the spiritual idea, by going up into the temple to pray, is meant the retiring within ourselves, or entering into the interior of our own minds, to open our hearts and understandings before the Great and Holy God, according to which sense of the words, man is called a temple, and sometimes a house or habitation of the Almighty. It is also to be noted, that prayer, properly considered, is nothing else but the opening of the interiors of the mind towards God and Heaven, by the exercise of devout affections and thoughts. For without devout affection and thought there can be no prayer, consequently, no opening of the mind towards God and Heaven.

A Pharisee, according to the literal sense of the term, means a person who belongs to a Jewish sect of that name; but according to the spiritual sense of the term, a person who is very exact and correct about the externals of religion, but careless about its internals; in other words, who is scrupulously attentive to forms and ceremonies of piety and divine worship, but utterly regardless of what those forms and ceremonies were intended to represent; or, according to the description given of such a character by Jesus Christ, *Who pays tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and omits the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith.* In short, a Pharisee is one who is holy without, but unholy within, or, as the Apostle expresses it, *who has a form of godliness, but without the power.*

According to the literal sense, a tax collector was one who collected the public taxes; and as the character of such a person was very odious and despicable amongst the Jews, therefore a tax collector was one whom the Jews held in the utmost contempt and aversion. But according to the spiritual idea, by a tax collector is to be understood one who is not only despised by others, but also by himself; in other words, who thinks little and meanly of his own spiritual attainments, and on that ground is disposed to exalt others above himself. Thus the tax collector, in this parable, represents the Gentiles, as the Pharisee represents the Jews. Consequently, the tax collector is a figure of those who are not principled in truth and the external forms of worship, but yet are in the earnest desire of being so principled; whilst the Pharisee is a figure of those who are indeed principled in heavenly knowledge and the ceremonies of religious worship, but yet have no desire at



all to form their lives according to such knowledge, and in agreement with the purport of such ceremonial observances.

It is said that *the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterous, or even as this tax collector.* We have seen that by prayer is to be understood interior thought and affection, when directed towards God and Heaven.

In the case of the Pharisee it is evidently the thought and affection of self-love, by which this deluded man was led to suppose himself better than others, and thus to exalt himself in the superiority of his own fancied virtues, at the same time making a pretence of gratitude to the Almighty for this fancied superiority. His prayer, therefore, had nothing in it but defilement, because it was derived from himself, and not from God, and thus was full of himself more than of God. For the true ground of pure and acceptable prayer is, humility and self-abasement, under a due sense of our wants, our weaknesses, and our defilements before our Heavenly Father, in which case our prayer connects itself with God, and acknowledges Him as its Divine Origin, and is thus filled with the fullness of its origin; whereas a prayer grounded in the idea of superior virtues, separates us more and more from God, by immersing us more and more in the dangerous and defiled idolatry of self-complacency and self-esteem.

The Pharisee makes this further boast concerning himself, *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

It appears from these expressions, that spiritual pride, which is here represented by the Pharisee, can mortify itself in a certain degree, or so far as relates to the external things of the body, and that it can also, in a certain degree, make sacrifices to God, but then with all its mortifications and sacrifices it still reserves to itself the vanity of its own self-love and self-esteem, and thus never makes the entire surrender of itself to the God of Heaven. Its mortifications, therefore, and its sacrifices, only tend to separate it further from heaven and eternal life, because they have a tendency to nourish a more dangerous self-love than could otherwise have prevailed.

It is also said of the tax collector, that, *standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

From these words we learn that real humility is always attended with a sentiment of its infinite distance from the divine purity, and, therefore, is said to stand afar off. We learn, too, that it is deeply sensible of its own blindness and opposition to the truth of God, and, therefore, it would not lift up its eyes to heaven; in other words, it is afraid of high speculations on heavenly doctrines, from a sense of its own unworthiness, and from a fear, at the same time, lest practice should not keep pace with speculation. We learn, further, that it is always impressed with a consciousness of its natural defilements, signified by beating on the breast. And lastly, we learn, that true humility is always in the act of applying itself to the Divine Mercy to heal the disorders of its blinded understanding and depraved will, signified by the passionate supplication, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* We discover, therefore, in this character of the humble tax collector, the true temper and disposition of the real Christian, as distinguished from the formal and hypocritical professor of Christianity, and that the real Christian is always abasing himself that he may exalt his God, and that his religion, therefore, consists in a deep-rooted sense of his own ignorance, defilement, and infirmity, and a consequent devout and constant application to the Father of Mercies for wisdom, for purity, and for

protection.

Jesus Christ says, *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.* When man enters into the interiors of his own mind, which is the true temple where proper and acceptable worship is performed to the Almighty, he is then said to go up, or ascend, because he draws nearer to that Holy Being in himself, who is called the Highest, and is said to dwell in the Highest, for what is inmost, according to the spiritual idea, is called highest according to a natural idea. But when he quits this holy exchange of devout affection with his Maker, and descends again into the exteriors of his thoughts and affections, to exercise them in the discharge of the common duties and engagements of life, he is then said to go down to his house, because exterior thought and affection are properly the house of man, as interior thought and affection are properly the house of God, so that every man has, as it were, two houses; one designed for his communication with God and His angelic kingdom, and the other designed for his communication with men in the exercises of charity and mutual good-will.

By being justified, is meant to be made just; and by his going; down to his house justified, is to be understood that he brought down a principle of justice into all the concerns of his external life, by thinking, speaking, and acting in agreement with such a principle, so that his external man was made just or justice, as well as his internal man. For this is the proper sense and meaning of the term justification, about which the Christian world has been so long and so unhappily divided; some insisting that man is justified by faith alone, some, that he is justified by charity, and some by good works; whereas, the truth is, that man is justified by the Divine Principle of Justice alone, so far as he admits this principle to pre-eminence in his inner man, and suffers it at the same time to control, direct, and govern all the thoughts, words, and works of his outer man. In the original language of the New Testament, therefore, the above passage is thus expressed, he went down justified to his house; in other words, he introduced into his house, or into all the concerns of his external man, a principle of justice, for continual guidance and government.

The parable speaks of his being justified rather than the other. By the other, is here meant the proud Pharisee; and, therefore, by the tax collector being justified rather than the Pharisee, is intended to be expressed, according to the idea of justification, just now suggested, that the Pharisee did not suffer a principle of justice from the Almighty to enter into his mind, and to operate in his life. For such is the nature of spiritual pride, or, what amounts to the same, of a defiled internal man, whilst the external man is occupied in holy things, that in such case the deluded worshipper never thinks of introducing into his life any solid principle, either of justice or equity, from God, to guide and govern him, but is content to think that he is justified by his external acts of piety, such as prayer, attendance at the holy altar, almsgiving, etc., without any regard to the Divine law of justice, which is nothing else but the law of the Divine love and mercy, by the observance of which alone man is restored to the order of heaven, and rendered just in the sight of God and of His angels.

Jesus Christ observes, at the conclusion of this parable, and as a maxim of truth resulting from it, *that every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

By man exalting himself is to be understood, that he sets his own will, his own understanding, and his own prudence above the Divine Will, the Divine Understanding, and the Divine Providence of the Most High; in other words, that he exalts his own reason above the Word of God, or if he acknowledges the Word of God with his

understanding; to be a revelation from God, yet he does not acknowledge it in his life and love, and, consequently, is proud and high-minded, despising others in comparison with himself, and serving God for no other end than to gain the favour of men. And by such a one being abased is to be understood, that in thus exalting himself, he departs from the order of God, and makes himself the vilest and lowest of all creatures, by separating himself from all living communication with the mercy, the truth, the greatness and omnipotence of God.

He that humbles himself denotes one who submits his own will, his own understanding, and his own prudence, to the Divine Will, the Divine Understanding, and the Divine Providence of his Heavenly Father, confessing; thus from his heart, that all goodness, all truth, all power, all protection, are from God, and nothing at all from man, only so far as he receives it from God. And by such a one being exalted is to be understood, that in consequence of thus submitting himself to the Divine government and guidance, he rises out of all his sins, his infirmities, his ignorances, and his miseries, to a blessed and eternal conjunction with the Supreme Goodness and the Supreme Truth. Thus he is exalted above himself, above the world, above false joys, and above real sorrows, to a communication with God and heaven, and eternal life and salvation, and all this in proportion to the measure and degree of his humiliation.

We learn from this parable that spiritual pride is most odious in the sight of God, being a symptom of the most defiled and dangerous self-love, and that we ought, therefore, to be particularly on our guard against this infectious evil, especially in contemplating any good actions which we may have performed, or any distinguished excellencies which we may appear to possess. We learn, further, that humility is the best state of the heart of man, and the state most pleasing in the sight of God, because it consists in renouncing our own will and our own wisdom, that we may exalt in ourselves, at all times, and on all occasions, the Divine Will and Divine Wisdom of the Most High. Lastly, we learn, that our justification in the sight of God will depend entirely on our advancement in the grace of humility, or in a due sense of our natural defilements, ignorances, imperfections, and weaknesses, since justification consists in the implantation of a principle of justice and equity from God, in all the thoughts, words, and works of the external man, who principle of justice can never be admitted into our minds until the opposite principle of injustice, which is the inordinate love of ourselves, and of the world, more than of God, and of our neighbour, be removed. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, through the Divine Grace and Mercy, to hate and abominate all spiritual pride, as a thing most infernal, and to tremble at, and detest the sight of whatever may be called our own excellence, or our own virtue, if it has a tendency at any time to prevent our praying, from the bottom of a broken and a contrite heart, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. Let us resolve, at the same time, through the Divine grace and mercy, to cherish in our minds the temper of humility, as a temper most heavenly, because most pleasing in the sight of God, and with this blessed view, to renounce, at all times, our own will, wisdom, and prudence, that the will, the wisdom, and providence of our Heavenly Father, may ever be exalted in our minds and lives. Thus may we hope always to be like the man who went down to his house justified, because we shall always carry down along with us the principle of Divine justice into every transaction of life, until we become ourselves heavenly forms of the same justice, both in the inner and outer man, that is to say, in our words and works, as well as in our inmost intentions and thoughts. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

John 10:1-5.

*Verily, verily, I say to you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the watchman opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

The repetition of the term *verily* is intended to denote the great importance of the subject to which it is annexed, and thus to excite the reader's attention accordingly. For the single term *verily* is expressive of the truth of what is asserted, and, therefore, when it is repeated, it is for the purpose of giving double force to such truth.

Under the term *sheepfold* Jesus Christ intended to figure and to describe His heavenly kingdom and its blessedness, and since this kingdom and its blessedness are derived solely from the conjunction of the divine love and wisdom in the minds of those angelic beings who compose that kingdom, therefore, the conjunction of those heavenly principles was intended here to be expressed by the term *sheepfold*. Not to enter in, then, by the door into the sheepfold, but to climb up some other way, manifestly implies an attempt to attain to the above conjunction of heavenly principles, without paying any regard to the means necessary for introduction to it, which introductory means are here expressed by the term *door*.

The person making this attempt is described as a *thief* and a *robber*, because, if the necessary means of introduction to the heavenly sheepfold are overlooked and disregarded, it must of necessity follow that the person who overlooks and disregards them will appropriate to himself the divine things of the Lord, which are His divine love and divine wisdom, as if they were his own, independent of the divine bounty, and thus will incur the censure annexed to the double character of a thief and a robber; for one of these titles was intended to express the enormous criminality, on the part of man, of supposing that he can understand any truth, when left merely to himself without divine influence, whilst the other term was intended to express the equal enormity of supposing that he can be affected by any good separate from that influence. The two terms, indeed, thief and robber, according to their common interpretation, have no distinct meaning, and are, therefore, generally understood as expressing the same idea; but in the language of Jesus Christ, which is the language of God Himself, we are constrained to acknowledge, that each term must necessarily be applied to a distinct idea, otherwise the two terms would be mere tautology. Jesus Christ, therefore, applied both terms according to the distinct idea above-mentioned, because He saw it to be a matter of the first importance, to guard mankind against the distinct crimes which they involve, and thus to lead them to the grateful acknowledgement, that all pure love and pure wisdom are the continual gifts of the divine unmerited bounty of the Most Merciful God.

It has already been shown what is meant by the sheepfold, and by not entering in by the door; and, therefore, it is plain, from what was said on the occasion, that to enter in by the

door implies the use and application of the means necessary to introduce to the conjunction of heavenly love and heavenly wisdom in the human mind, and thus of the means necessary for man's conjunction with the Supreme Good and the Supreme Truth. The person, therefore, who so enters in, is called the shepherd of the sheep, because the term sheep involves in it all the recipients of the above heavenly principles; and, of course, the term shepherd involves in it all those who cherish those principles by incorporating them into their lives. Jesus Christ, accordingly, afterwards calls Himself the Good Shepherd, to denote that in His Humanity He was ever cherishing the principles of the divine love and wisdom, until He fully incorporated them into His mind and life, and by so doing made His Humanity Divine, or One with the Eternal Father.

It is said, *to him the watchman opens*. By the watchman is here to be understood the Divine Good of the Divine Love of the Most High, which is called the watchman, because it stands continually at the door which leads to the conjunction of the divine love and wisdom in human minds; and he is said to open, because through the divine good of the divine love, and through that alone, communication is effected between man and his Maker, by virtue of which communication man is finally introduced to an eternal conjunction of the heavenly principles of love and wisdom in his own mind, and thus to an eternal conjunction also with the Divine Father and Fountain of those principles.

The sheep denote, as was observed above, all those who become receptive of the divine love and wisdom; and their hearing his voice, or the voice of the watchman, means that they are ever attentive and obedient to the Eternal Truth, which is here signified by his voice. For the term his, in this place, has manifest relation to the watchman above-mentioned, by whom is signified, as was before shown, the Divine Good of the Divine Love of the Most High, the voice of which good can, therefore, mean nothing else but the Divine Truth, because nothing else properly proceeds from the Divine Good but the Divine Truth.

It next follows, that *He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out*. The sheep are here called His own sheep, to denote not only that they are principled in heavenly love and wisdom, but also that they acknowledge such love and wisdom to be from their Heavenly Father, thus not their own, only so far as they derive the heavenly gift from Him. It is further said of these sheep, that He calls them by name, and leads them out; because to call them by name, denotes that He is acquainted with all their qualities, thus with the distinct manner and degree in which each is receptive of His Divine Love and Wisdom; and because by leading them out is intended to be described His fatherly care over them, in conducting them to the knowledge of Himself, by instructing them in all truth relating to Himself, and to His heavenly kingdom.

It is afterwards added, that *He brings out His own sheep, and goes before them, and the sheep follow Him*.

The several distinctions here made are grounded in the double operation which the Almighty exercises on human minds, by leading them, first, to the knowledge of Himself and of His eternal kingdom, through the manifestation of heavenly truth in their understandings; and, next, by influencing them to act according to that truth, from the love of it, as operative in their wills. Thus the two expressions, leading them out, and putting them forth, were intended to mark the divine leading and government exercised by Jesus Christ over man in both principles of his constitution, namely, his understanding and his will, or his thoughts and his affections, and so to denote the entire guidance and rule which the Father of Mercies continually claims to Himself, over all His intelligent

creatures, for their happiness and salvation. It is, therefore, added, He goes before them, to denote that when man becomes submissive and obedient to the divine rule and government of the Most High, he then lives perpetually in the Divine presence, and beholds the divine countenance ever before his eyes conducting him to the regions of bliss, by introducing him daily to a closer conjunction with all that is good, and wise, and happy. In this case it is further said, that the sheep follow Him, because to follow Him is an expression to denote an entire submission to His heavenly rule and government, and especially the imitation of His example that as He glorified His humanity by combats against the powers of darkness, and by continual obedience to the guidance and government of the divine love in Himself, so His sheep labour to attain conjunction of life with Him, by opposing the same powers of darkness, in submission to the guidance and government of heavenly love and wisdom ever flowing from that Glorified or Divine Humanity.

It is first said that *the sheep hear His voice*; and afterwards, that they know His voice, to point out a distinction which is of the utmost importance to be attended to, because to hear the watchman's voice is an expression intended to denote an obedient will; whereas to know His voice, is an expression intended to denote an enlightened understanding, as resulting from an obedient will. Thus the two expressions combined were designed to mark the full reception and operation of heavenly truth, both in the will and in the understanding, until it takes entire possession of the whole man, by rendering him receptive of its purifying and enlightening influences in those two grand faculties of his life, and thereby forming him entirely after its own image and likeness. It is, therefore, added, *A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers*, to denote that they will no longer suffer themselves to be led by evil principles and false persuasions, originating in the powers of darkness, which are here called strangers, but will rather turn their backs upon them, and for this eternal reason, because they know not their voice; in other words, because they have no fellowship or communion with the false and erroneous doctrines signified by that voice.

We learn from this parable all the instruction which Jesus Christ sums up in the following words, as its application, where he says, *Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the Door of the sheep; all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the Door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (Verses 7-11).

This application teaches us that Jesus Christ, as to His Divine Humanity, is the only door of introduction to the heavenly sheepfold, and that, consequently, we can never hope for any communication or conjunction with the Supreme Good, called the Father, only so far as we seek it in that Humanity. We learn, further, that all who set aside that Divine Humanity, and seek conjunction with the Eternal Father separate from it, are thieves and robbers; in other words, that they appropriate to themselves the Divine things of God, by claiming and holding them independently of the Divine Giver. We are instructed, yet further, that if we are wise to enter in at the above door; in other words, if we draw near to Jesus Christ in His Divine Humanity, and approach Him with a sincere heart, we shall be sure to find deliverance from all evil, and a communication of every heavenly good, both internal and external. Lastly, we learn, that they who do not approach Jesus Christ in His Divine Humanity, and who consequently appropriate to themselves the Divine things of

His holy love and wisdom, independently of Him, deprive themselves of all heavenly communication of love, of wisdom, and of life, whilst they who are wise to draw near to Jesus Christ as the only God, because the only Giver of every good gift, not only open in their own minds a communication with His life of love and wisdom, but also receive that life in a greater fullness than was ever before received by the children of men, agreeably to the prophetic declaration, where it is written concerning the appearing of the Incarnate God, *Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days* (Is. 30:26). Let us resolve, therefore, from now on, to believe in and approach Jesus Christ, in His Divine Humanity, as our only God and Saviour, and no longer to attempt to climb up into the sheepfold any other way. Thus let us resolve to acknowledge all that we are, or have, to be the merciful gifts of that Great God and Saviour, that so we may no longer separate ourselves from the communications of His mercy, by calling anything our own independent of His bounty, but may rather experience a more abundant increase of His heavenly love and wisdom in ourselves, whilst we approach Him, as He wills to be approached, in that Glorified Humanity which He was pleased to assume for the gracious purpose of giving man more free access to Himself, and thus of securing to Himself a fuller and more free access to man. Amen.

# THE PARABLE

OF

## THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

John 15:1-7.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you.*

Jesus Christ here calls Himself the true vine in agreement with the language of correspondence, or the relation subsisting, because established at creation, between things natural and things spiritual, agreeably to which relation the vine is a representative figure of spiritual truth, and is, accordingly, so applied in the Book of Revelation, which is the Word of God. Thus, in the blessing which Jacob pronounces on his sons, it is said concerning Judah, *Binding his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine* (Gen. 49:11), in which words it is evident that the vine is spoken of according to its above spiritual signification. To the same purpose it is written in the book of Psalms, *You have brought a vine out of Egypt; you have cast out the heathen and planted it, etc* (Psalm 80:8), where it must be evident to every considerate person, that by a vine is not meant a vine, but a spiritual principle, or what is the same thing, a spiritual people, represented by a vine. It is for the same reason, that the Church, or people of God, are called a vineyard, because a vineyard implies a portion of earth allotted to the cultivation of vines, and since the Church, or people of God, are a Church and people by virtue of the reception of spiritual truth, they are accordingly called a vineyard, as it is written, *The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant* (Isaiah 5:7). Agreeably to the same idea, in the prophetic writings throughout, evangelical graces and virtues are constantly figured and described by different kinds of trees or plants answering to those graces and virtues. Thus it is written, *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fig tree, and the pine, and the box tree together* (Isaiah 41:19), where it must again be evident to every reflecting mind, that some spiritual principles are signified, which are in agreement with the above trees, since it is written in the verse which immediately follows, *That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it*. Again, it is written, *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and then it is added, it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that there shall be no cutting off* (Isaiah 55:13); from which words it is again manifest, that, in the language of Revelation, spiritual graces and blessings are figured and represented by different kinds of trees. Jesus Christ accordingly calls Himself the true vine, as being the Source and All of Spiritual Truth, by virtue of which His Church or people, are enabled to attain conjunction of life with Himself.



Jesus Christ further says of this vine, *My Father is the gardener*. Whenever Jesus Christ speaks of His Father, He speaks of the Essential Divine Principle which was in Himself, as His inmost soul and life, and which was distinct from Himself before His full glorification, and distinct in this, that the Father was the Divine Good in Himself, whereas He Himself, as to His Humanity, before it was fully united with the Divinity, was the Divine Truth. The Father, therefore, is called the gardener, or, as the original term might be better expressed, the vine dresser, inasmuch as the cultivation of the vine, or the growth and fruitfulness of heavenly truth, is always from the Divine Good of heavenly love and charity. It is not, then, to be supposed that Jesus Christ and His Father are separate beings, as they would appear to be from the above description in the letter, but that they are one and the same being, only with this distinction, that the Father is the inmost principle of that being, being its very Essential Life, whereas Jesus Christ, previous to the full glorification of His Humanity, was the external principle, here called the true vine, which is to be supposed as advancing gradually to a full union with its internal life or soul, until at length they were no longer two but one, on which occasion the Humanity became Divine, being fully incorporated with its Essential Divinity.

It is written, *Every branch in me that bears not fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Every one who receives the Eternal Truth in his understanding is called a branch in the true vine Jesus Christ: the reason is, because by virtue of such reception he has communication with Jesus Christ in his understanding, and in consequence of such communication receives a degree of life from Him, in the same manner that a branch derives life from its parent stock.

The *fruit*, here spoken of, is charity, or an operative good-will towards men, producing all kinds of good and useful works; and not to bear this fruit is to have knowledge, but not a life corresponding to knowledge; in other words, it is to have truth in the understanding, but not the good of truth in the will, in which case the branch is entirely useless, and does not answer the purpose for which it was created, since the end of all knowledge is to conduct to the life of knowledge, and the end of all truth is to lead to the good of truth, which is the love and the life of good works.

Concerning this branch, it is said, that *He* (the Father) *takes it away*; but this is to be understood as spoken merely according to the appearance, since to those who are thus taken away, it appears to be the act and deed of the Almighty, whereas in truth and reality they take themselves away. For such is the case with every one who receives the knowledge of the Eternal Truth, and does not suffer himself to be conducted by that knowledge to its heavenly and blessed life, and thus to a living conjunction with its Divine Source, that he takes himself away from that Source, notwithstanding every effort of the Source itself to preserve him from separation. Thus every sinner brings his own destruction upon himself, although it appears to him that his destruction comes from God.

It is declared of the branch that bears fruit, that *He purges it that it may bring forth more fruit*. By this is to be understood the purification effected by the Supreme Good with all those who have attained to any state of conjunction of heavenly good and heavenly truth in their own minds and lives, by abiding in Jesus Christ the true vine. In regard to such purification, the case is this, that no good or truth received by man or angel can be absolutely pure, so as to be incapable of receiving any higher degree of purity. Nevertheless, every good and truth, whether received by man or angel, is capable of an indefinite advancement in purification, which advancement is effected successively in the

progress of regeneration, both during man's abode in this world, and afterwards in the eternal world. It is further to be noted, that this purification is generally accomplished under some state of trial or temptation, it being the end and tendency of every such trial and temptation, to lead man into humiliation, and by humiliation into closer conjunction with his Heavenly Father, or the Supreme Good, and of course into a higher state of purification from the inordinate love of himself and the world, which love is the grand source of all defilement.

From what has been said concerning the progress of man's purification, it is evident, that as he advances in it, he attains at the same time to some new state of heavenly good and truth, which is the *more fruit* spoken of, when it is said *That it may bring forth more fruit*. It is, therefore, an eternal law of the divine order, in regard to man's regeneration, that he should never stand still in any present attainments, let them in themselves be ever so excellent, but should always be pressing forward to the possession of some new and higher good, and to the illumination of some new and higher order of truth. Every present attainment, therefore, is only to be considered as preparatory to some new attainment, and thus it is that man enters into a career of gradual approach towards the Eternal, ever bringing forth more fruit to the glory of the Divine Vine-dresser, and to his own eternal happiness and comfort.

It is added, *Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you*. To judge from appearance, these words seem to be quite unconnected with what goes before. The want of connection, however, is only apparent, and not real, for in the preceding words mention had been made of the *purification of the branch which bears fruit, that it may bring forth more fruit*, and Jesus Christ now explains the manner in which that purification is effected, as well as the principle by which it is effected. For He now teaches that this purification is accomplished by and through His Word, as it is received in the hearts and understandings of those to whom it is addressed, and, further, as it is seen to be in connection with Himself, the only Divine Source of all truth. For such is the nature of man's purification from his natural evils and errors, that it cannot be worked without the reception of truth, and that truth cannot be received unless it be received conjointly in the will, the understanding, and the works of the true penitent; neither can it still be purifying, unless it be seen and acknowledged in its continual connection with its Divine Source, and that Source be seen and acknowledged to be Jesus Christ in His Divine Humanity, and Him alone. When Jesus Christ, therefore, said, *Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you*, He meant to explain more particularly the purification of which He had been before speaking, and to show that it was effected by and through the Eternal Truth in its everlasting union with Himself.

Jesus Christ continues his discourse in these words, *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me*.

He is here speaking of the conjunction between Himself and His Church, thus between Himself and every individual member of the Church; and He would teach, that this conjunction cannot be effected unless it be mutual or reciprocal, thus unless there be an uniting love in both the parties. For the case with this conjunction is like that of all other spiritual conjunctions whatsoever, it being very well known that the spiritual conjunction subsisting between two friends cannot take place unless it be mutual; in other words, unless each friend be attracted to the other by mutual love and interest. This is especially the case in regard to that highest and most important of all spiritual conjunctions which is

here spoken of, namely, the conjunction between Jesus Christ and His Church, in effecting which it is not sufficient that Jesus Christ, on His part, loves His Church, but His Church, on her part, must also love Him in return, by accounting Him as her greatest and sovereign good. It is however to be understood that the Church cannot thus mutually love her Divine Lord by any love properly her own, or which she derives from herself alone, but a love which she receives continually from her Lord, and which she humbly and gratefully acknowledges to be so received. In this respect, therefore, Jesus Christ is to be regarded as the alone active principle of love, whilst the Church exercises only a passive principle; but then it is to be considered, that this passive principle is intended to become, in its place, an active one, in submission to, and continual dependence on, the Supreme Activity of her Divine Lord.

Jesus Christ says, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.*

He teaches by this plainest and most significant of all figures, that His Church, or the individuals who compose it, cannot attain to any state of heavenly life and love, with its consequent operation, unless by faith and love they attach themselves to their Divine Lord, and to His essential mercy and truth. For it is obvious to every one, that the branch of a tree cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the parent stock; and since the connection between Jesus Christ and His Church, as has been already shown, is like that which subsists between the vine and its branches, therefore it follows, of necessity, that no member of the Lord's Church can possibly bear the fruit of saving-life, which is the life of love and charity, unless they have perpetual conjunction with the parent stock of love and charity, that is to say, with Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ said to His disciples, *I am the vine, you are the branches*, He meant to declare to them, and through them to all future disciples, the sacred and distinguishing relationship which subsisted between Himself and them. He meant, therefore, to announce to them the important truth, that they received life continually from Him, even the ever-blessed life of love, of wisdom, of charity, of faith, and of every other heavenly grace and blessing. He meant, further, to instruct them, that if they were wise, to regard Him with mutual affection, by acknowledging gratefully the all of their life to be derived from Him, they would then bring forth much fruit; in other words, there would be a continual multiplication and increase of all heavenly graces and virtues, and this successively, one state of grace and virtue ever giving birth to a new one, and this new one to another and another in endless generations. Lastly, He meant to warn them of the great danger to which they were exposed of separating their life from His life, or, what is the same thing, their love from His love, by informing them, that without Him, or apart from Him, they can do nothing; in other words, they can produce no grace or virtue; they can bring forth no fruit either of love towards God, or of charity towards men; and, of course, they must remain barren and unprofitable branches.

It is afterwards written, *If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

It has already been shown what is meant by abiding in Jesus Christ, and consequently by not abiding in Him. Jesus Christ, therefore, teaches in these words the several effects of not abiding in Him; first, that he who does not abide in Him, *is cast forth as a branch*, by which is signified, that he has no longer any fellowship, communion, or conjunction of life with Jesus Christ; secondly, that he is withered, by which is to be understood, that he is deprived of all spiritual love and spiritual wisdom, thus of all spiritual life; thirdly, that

*men gather them*, to denote, that when they are thus cast forth and withered, they are brought into association with those in the spiritual world who are in a similar disposition with themselves; fourthly, *that they are cast into the fire*, by which is represented, that they are delivered up to the fire of their own cravings, which are nothing else but the inordinate love of themselves and of the world; fifthly, that they are burned, by which is further represented, that they are left to perish in those cravings. It is, however, well to be understood, that all these effects are the necessary results of not abiding in Jesus Christ, and thus that they are not to be regarded as punishments inflicted by what is commonly called the wrath and vengeance of the Almighty, but rather as the natural consequences of the sinner's rejection of all heavenly love and wisdom for government and for guidance.

Jesus Christ adds, further, *If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you.*

By the words of Jesus Christ, abiding in man, is to be understood, that man endeavours to form his whole life, both of will, of understanding, and of work, in agreement with the life and spirit of the precepts of Jesus Christ, the result of which abiding is here declared to be, that he shall ask what he will, and it shall be done to him, for in this case it will be impossible for him to ask or desire anything but what is agreeable to the will of God his Saviour, and, therefore, he is sure to have whatsoever he asks or desires, since it is connected with Omnipotence, and inspired by that Divine Being of whom it is written, *He shall fulfil the desire of them that fear Him.* Thus man comes into possession of all that he can will or wish, since the whole of his will and wish is, that the designs of the Almighty may be accomplished, and His *will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

We learn, first, from this parable, the near and holy connection subsisting between Jesus Christ, ourselves, and all His creatures, by virtue of the reception of the Eternal Truth, of which He is the Divine Source and Only Fountain. We learn, further, that this connection includes two very different descriptions of people; first, of those in whom it produces its proper fruits; and, secondly, of those in whom it produces no fruits. Under the first class are included all those who to the knowledge of the Eternal Truth join the love and the practice of it, and thus attain conjunction of life with Jesus Christ in His own ever blessed spirit of love and charity. Under the second class are included all those who receive the knowledge of truth in their understanding, but do not suffer that knowledge to influence their wills, their love, and their operation, consequently, who never attain any conjunction of life with their God and Saviour, but only what may be called connection with Him by virtue of the knowledge which they have admitted into their understandings. We learn, further, that with all those who are wise to unite knowledge with the life of knowledge, a continual purification takes place in all the principles of their lives, by virtue of their conjunction with the Supreme Good, so that a continual separation is effected of all the powers of evil, of error, and of misery, and they are gradually elevated to nearer and nearer communication with all that is good and wise in the Kingdom of Heaven. Lastly, we learn the terrible effects of disjoining knowledge from the life of knowledge, as also the happy effects of uniting them together, since, in the first case, man is left to perish in the fire of his own cravings, being cast out and separated from all communication with heaven and its God; whereas, in the latter case, he obtains the full gratification of all his desires, since, being submitted in all things to the divine will and wisdom, he has nothing to wish or ask but that that will and wisdom may in all things be accomplished. Let us resolve, therefore, from now on to take heed to ourselves, that we may always be found abiding in Jesus Christ, and having *His Word abiding in us*, and that thus escaping all the

mischief's arising from the knowledge of truth unpractised and unbeyed, we may finally attain to all that infinite happiness resulting from the conjunction of knowledge with the life of knowledge, or, what is the same thing, of truth with its good, or, what is still the same thing, of faith with charity, or, what is still the same, of ourselves with our Heavenly Father. Amen.

# DAILY PRAYER

## USE OF A FAMILY,

### A PARAPHRASE ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

O all-merciful and all-wise father, who have made heaven and earth, and all things therein, for the manifestation of your glory, and who are the essential life and all-powerful preserver of everything that you have made, we, your sinful children, desire to bow down ourselves in unfeigned humility, penitence, and obedience, before you, meekly supplicating your divine grace to enable us to perform a true and acceptable worship in your sight. With grateful and affectionate hearts we acknowledge that divine mercy, which inclined you of old to descend here on earth in the person of Jesus Christ, and thus to work redemption for your people, by subduing the Powers of Darkness, by glorifying the Human Nature which you were pleased to assume, and by rendering yourself therein visible, known, and approachable to your otherwise lost creatures. And whilst we return to you our most grateful thanks for this your adorable and most astonishing willing descent to our infirmities, we entreat you, with all possible earnestness, to enable us to profit by it. For this purpose may we ever cherish, through your most holy influence, a just and devout sense of that Divine Humanity in which you now and for ever dwellest, and by which alone we can have access to you, or you to us. Grant us thus the grace ever more to draw near to the Glorified Person of Jesus Christ, that so we may no longer worship an invisible, an unknown, and a distant God, but be convinced, to our everlasting comfort, that in the divine body of that Great Redeemer, you are at once visible, known, and continually present with your suppliant children. We further adore your infinite loving-kindness, in vouchsafing to us the revelation of your most Holy Word, and thus bringing near to us all the fullness of your divine will and wisdom, by which alone we can hope to recover your lost image and likeness, and to attain a living conjunction with you, and you with us. But whilst we confess herein your marvelous and undeserved bounty to us, grant us the grace, we beseech you, to use it aright to your glory and our own salvation. With this view, may our understandings be opened to see through the letter of your sacred councils, into their interior sense of life, in which you reside with all the blessings of your kingdom. May our minds thus be formed according to your eternal truth, and our wills and affections governed and guarded by its all-purifying, all-illuminating, and all-protecting influence. And since we can never hope for the accomplishment of this blessed end, unless our *outward* man be also obedient to your most Holy Commandments, grant to us, O Heavenly Father, the additional grace to cease from the practice of all known evil, and at the same time to be diligent, faithful, and upright in the discharge of all those duties and engagements to which you have been pleased to call us in our several stations. May we thus, in all humility and gratitude, receive and incorporate into our lives your tender love, and all-enlightening wisdom, that as our bodies are daily nourished by the bodily food, which you in your mercy supply, so our souls may be continually refreshed and recruited by the more substantial food of your most Holy and Eternal Word. Yet since, through the frailty of our corrupt natures, we have been, and frequently are, insensible of these your inestimable blessings, and thus grievously sin against you; forgive, we entreat you, these our manifold offences, and so dispose our hearts, to a continually grateful acknowledgement of your divine mercies, and to a continually contrite sense of our own natural un-thankfulness, that we may now on make a due return for all your bounty, by seeing, confessing, and rejoicing to confess, that it is your, and that

we ourselves, at our best estate, are nothing but unworthy receivers of your precious gifts. And may the remembrance of all your unmerited favours ever dispose us to be kind and gentle, tender and compassionate, patient and forgiving, just and upright, one towards another, that so your divine mercy may circulate freely in us, and we may never obstruct in ourselves its heavenly operation. But whereas our own corrupt wills, in this respect, are naturally opposite to your will, and much spiritual struggle and conflict must therefore be endured before we can be merciful to our fellow-creatures, as you are merciful to us, be pleased, O Almighty Saviour, to strengthen and support us in these combats against our corruptions, so that, finally, all the deadly evils of our rebellious nature may be softened and subdued, and all the graces and virtues of your Holy Spirit and kingdom may be implanted in their place. May we thus be enabled to take part with you against ourselves, by fighting manfully against the devil, the world, and the flesh. And may we finally, through this combat, enter into the joys of spiritual conquest and victory, by experiencing a happy deliverance from those powers of darkness to which our sins have subjected us, and, at the same time, a triumphant entrance into a blessed communion with you, and your holy angels, in that everlasting kingdom, where we shall ever rejoice in ascribing our salvation to you alone, joining in the angelic song, and saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Amen.

We desire to conclude these our imperfect prayers in that most perfect form which you yourself have taught us.

Our Father which are in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.