

## PARABLE XXIX.

## THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

LUKE xviii. 9-14.

SOME interpreters have found in this parable, as in that of Dives and Lazarus, a prophecy of the rejection of the Jews, with the reception into God's grace of the Gentiles; the Pharisee representing for them that whole nation which would assuredly have accepted him as embodying its ideal—the publican representing the Gentiles, with whom these hated ministers of Roman oppression were commonly classed. They see in the one the Jew, glorying in his own merits, and proudly extolling himself in these, but through this very pride and self-righteousness failing to become partaker of the righteousness of God; in the other the Gentile, who meekly acknowledging his vileness, and repenting his sins, obtains the grace which the Jew has missed.<sup>1</sup> So long as no more is claimed by the advocates of this interpretation than that Jew and Gentile illustrated on the largest scale the solemn truths which are here declared, it may very fairly pass. But

<sup>1</sup> So Vitringa, *Erkl. d. Parab.* p. 974. Augustine too (*Enarr. in Ps.* lxxiv. 8) allows this application, though not as the primary: 'Taking this in a wider sense, we may understand it as of the two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles, the Pharisee standing for the Jewish people, the Publican for the Gentiles. The Jewish people boasted of their merits, the Gentiles confessed their sins.' So H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Luc.*): 'The Pharisee signifies the Jewish people, who from the laws of justification extol their own merits, and fall away because of their pride. The humbled Publican signifies the Gentile, who is placed afar off from God, but confesses his sins, and by his lamentations draws nigh unto God and is exalted.'

the words which introduce the parable, '*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,*' words which must give the law to its interpretation, refute this when made the primary intention with which it was spoken. For who were these '*certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous*'? Assuredly not Pharisees, nor any who avowedly admired Pharisees, as did the great body of the Jews. What profit would it have been to hold up to such the spectacle of a Pharisee praying as this one prays in the parable? *They* would have seen nothing unseemly in it; they would have counted it the most natural and fittest thing in the world that he should pray exactly in this fashion. But a disciple, one already having made some little progress in the school of Christ, yet in danger, as we are all in danger, of falling back into pharisaic sins, such a one would only need his sin to be plainly shown to him, and he would start back at its deformity; he would recognize the latent Pharisee in himself, and tremble and repent.<sup>1</sup> It was in some of his own disciples and followers, that the Lord had detected symptoms of spiritual pride and self-exaltation, accompanied, as these will be ever, with a contempt of others: and it is to their disease that He proceeds in the parable to apply a remedy.

'*Two men went up into the temple to pray,*' at one, no doubt, of the stated hours of devotion (Acts iii. 1; Isai. lvi. 7), '*the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican;*' a Brahmin and a Pariah, as one might say, if preaching from this Gospel in India—the Pharisee, representing all those who, having

<sup>1</sup> Greswell arrives at the same conclusion, although by another line of argument (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. iv. p. 247, sqq.): 'Of what use in a moral point of view would it be to hold up to the Pharisee the true picture of himself and his sect? or what hope could there be of correcting his characteristic vices, whatever they were, by laying them bare, and exposing them openly and nakedly before himself? Such an exposure might be well calculated to irritate and offend, but not to reform or amend them; for it cannot be supposed that they would willingly be parties in their own disgrace, or patiently acquiesce in their own condemnation.'

made clean the outside of the platter, have remained ignorant of all the uncleanness within—have never learned to say, 'Deliver me from mine adversary,' do not so much as know that they have an adversary; the publican, an example of all those who have found their sins an intolerable burden; and now yearn after One who shall deliver them from these and from the curse of God's broken law. Christ will make his disciples understand how much nearer to the kingdom of God is such a man than the self-complacent Pharisee, or than any who share in his spirit and temper; that he *may be* within that kingdom, while this other is certainly without.<sup>1</sup>

'*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.*' It is a mistake, growing out of forgetfulness of Jewish and early Christian customs, to urge this *standing* of the Pharisee in his prayer as an evidence already displaying itself of his pride. The parable itself contradicts this, for the publican, whose prayer was an humble one, stood also (ver. 13). But to pray standing was the usual manner of the Jews (1 Kin. viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12; Matt. vi. 5; Mark xi. 25); however, in moments of a more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they may have exchanged this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration (Dan. vi. 10; 2 Chron. iv. 13; Acts ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5). The Church owes this, as so much in the external features of its worship, to the Synagogue.<sup>2</sup> Its *stations* of prayer were so called, because *standing* the Christian soldier repelled the attacks of his spiritual enemy. At the same time, when we weigh the word of the original, this '*stood*' may very well be emphatic, indeed we may confidently assert that it is. It implies that he, so to speak, took his stand, planted and put himself in a prominent attitude of prayer; so

<sup>1</sup> Gregory the Great (*Mor.* xix. 21) wittily likens this Pharisee, and all who, because of their victory over certain temptations, are exalted with pride, and so perish through their very successes, to Eleazar, who killed the elephant, but was himself crushed by its falling body (1 Macc. vi. 46): 'In the battle he wounded and struck down an elephant, but fell himself beneath the beast which he destroyed.'

<sup>2</sup> See Bingham, *Christ. Antt.* xiii. 8. 3; Vitringa, *De Synagogâ*, p. 1105.

that all eyes might light on him, all might take note that he was engaged in his devotions (Matt. vi. 5).<sup>1</sup> The words are not always combined as our Translators have combined them, but rather as follows: '*The Pharisee stood by himself,*<sup>2</sup> and *prayed thus:*'—*separatist* in spirit as in name,<sup>3</sup> and now also in outward act, he desired to put a distance between himself and all unclean worshippers (see Isai. lxxv. 5). The other construction, however, should be adhered to.

His prayer at first seems to promise well; '*God, I thank thee;*' for the Pharisees, as Grotius well observes, 'did not exclude the divine help. But they who use this language of thankfulness are frequently ungrateful to that help, allotting, as they do, to themselves the first share in virtuous actions, to God the second; or so recognizing common benefits, as to avoid fleeing as suppliants to that peculiar mercy which their own sins require.'<sup>4</sup> Thus it was with this man; while a due

<sup>1</sup> Tirinus: 'The Pharisee stood with a proud and uplifted heart, as if provoking God to judgment;' Godet: 'The term *σταθεῖς* denotes an attitude of confidence and even of hardness.' On the whole attitude of the publican, compare Cyprian, *De Orat. Dom.* ad init.; and Ambrose, *De Off. Minist.* i. 18. 70.

<sup>2</sup> So Cameron, and J. Cappellus in the *Critici Sacri*, who make *πρὸς ἑαυτὸν = καθ' ἑαυτὸν*.

<sup>3</sup> Hesychius: 'Pharisee; set apart, separated, pure.' Bernard: 'He gives thanks not because he is good, but because he is alone; not so much for the good things which he has, as for the bad things which he sees in others.'

<sup>4</sup> An interesting anecdote is told of the writer of these words, which connects itself with this parable. Grotius, returning in 1645 from Sweden to Holland, where he proposed to pass the evening of his days, was wrecked on the coast of Pomerania. He made his way with difficulty to Rostock, where mortal illness, brought on by the hardships and dangers he had undergone, acting on a body already infirm, overtook him. Being made aware of his danger, he summoned Quistorp, a high Lutheran theologian, not unknown in the history of the Lutheran Church, to his side. I will leave to this latter to tell the remainder of the story in his own words: 'I drew nigh and found the sick man almost in his last agony. I spoke to him and told him that nothing would have pleased me more than to have met him in health and held conversation with him. To this he replied, God has willed it thus. I then proceeded to admonish him to prepare himself for his blessed

recognition of God's grace will always be accompanied with deep self-abasement, confessing, as we must, how little true we have been to that grace, how short we have fallen of what we might have been, with such helps at command. And thus the early promise of the Pharisee's prayer quickly disappears; for under the pretence of thankfulness to God, he does but thinly veil his exaltation of self; and he cannot thank God for the good which he fancies that he finds in himself, without insulting and casting scorn upon others for the evil which he sees, or fancies that he sees, in them. He thanks God, but not aright; <sup>1</sup> thanks Him that he is '*not as other men are,*' or still more emphatically, '*as the rest of men are,*' distributing the whole of mankind into two classes, putting himself in

journey, to acknowledge himself a sinner, and to grieve for his misdeeds, and as in my talk I touched upon the publican who confessed himself a sinner and prayed that God would have mercy upon him, he made answer, *I am that publican.* I then went on and committed him unto Christ, besides whom there is no salvation, and he rejoined, All my hope is placed in Christ alone. With a clear voice I then recited in German that German prayer which begins, Herr Jesu Christ, wahrer Mensch &c.; and folding his hands he followed me under his breath. When I had ended I asked if he had understood me? He replied, I understood well. I then went on to recite from the Word of God such things as are wont to be recalled to the memories of those on the point of death, and asked if he understood me? He replied, I hear your voice, but find it hard to understand the words. When he had said this he fell into complete silence, and a little while afterwards gave up the ghost.' When one thinks of all which must have divided Grotius the Arminian and Quistorp the Lutheran, each too a foremost leader in his own camp, it is deeply interesting to note how in that supreme moment everything which kept them apart falls out of sight, alike on one side and on the other. In Christ, and in his free grace as the one hope of sinners, they are at one. To this, and to this only, the one points; in this, and in this only, the other rests. Quistorp's letter, which is not addressed to Calov,—as I stated in some former editions, relying on second-hand information which betrayed me here into more than one inaccuracy,—but to Elias Taddel, Professor of Theology at Rostock, is reprinted in Krabbe's *Aus dem kirchl. und. wissenschaftl. Leben Rostocks*, 1863, p. 383.

<sup>1</sup> Augustine says here (*Serm.* cxv. 3), with an eye to the Pelagians, the *ingrati gratiæ*, 'ungrateful for grace': 'What therefore is he who impiously fights against grace, if he is blamed who is proud in his gratitude?'

a class alone, and thrusting down every one else into the other. And as he cannot think too good things of himself, so neither too bad of others. They do not merely fall a little short of his perfections, but are '*extortioners, unjust, adulterers,*'—and then, his eye alighting on the publican,<sup>1</sup> of whom he may have known nothing but that he *was* a publican, he drags him into his prayer, making him to furnish the dark background on which the bright colours of his own virtues shall more gloriously be displayed;—finding, it may be, in the deep heart-earnestness with which the contrite man beat his breast, in the fixedness of his downcast eyes, proofs in confirmation of the judgment which he passes upon him. *He*, thank God, has no need to beat his breast in that fashion, nor to cast his eyes in that shame upon the ground.

So perfect is he in the fulfilment of the precepts of the second table. He now returns to the first; in that also he is faultless. '*I fast twice in the week.*' He has his works of supererogation. Moses appointed but one fast-day in the year, the great day of atonement<sup>2</sup> (Lev. xvi. 29; Num. xxix. 7); but the devouter Jews, both those who were, and those who would seem such, the Pharisees above all, kept two fasts weekly,<sup>3</sup> on the second day and the fifth. '*I give tithes of all that I possess;*' or rather, '*of all that I get.*'<sup>4</sup> He, another Jacob, has made the same promise to God as the patriarch of old: 'Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee' (Gen. xxviii. 22; cf. xiv. 20). The law

<sup>1</sup> Augustine (*Enarr.* 1<sup>a</sup> in Ps. lxx. 2): 'This is no longer to exult, it is to insult.'

<sup>2</sup> Called therefore 'the fast' (Acts xxvii. 2), 'the feast of fasting' (Philo).

<sup>3</sup> The Latin Fathers are led astray by τοῦ σαββάτου here (in the Vulgate, sabbato), and understand the Pharisee to say that he fasted twice upon the Sabbath, whatever they may have understood by this (see Augustine, *Ep.* xxxvi. 4). But the week was entitled τὰ σάββατα, or as here, τὸ σάββατον (cf. Mark xvi. 9; 1 Cor. xvi. 2), deriving its title from its chiefest day.

<sup>4</sup> Ὅσα κτῶμαι = quæ mihi redeunt. It is only the perfect κέκτημαι which means 'I possess,' i.e. I have acquired. All the English Versions, with the Vulgate (quæ possideo), share in a common error.

commanded only to tithe the fruits of the field and increase of the cattle (Num. xviii. 21 ; Deut. xiv. 22 ; Lev. xxvii. 30) ; but he, no doubt, tithed mint and cummin (Matt. xxiii. 23 ; Luke xi. 42), *all* that came into his possession (Tob. i. 7, 8), down to the trifles about which there was question, even in the Jewish schools, whether it was obligatory to tithe them or not (Hos. xii. 8). He will thus bring in God as his debtor ; misusing those very precepts concerning fasting and paying of tithes, given to men, the first to waken in them the sense of inward poverty and need, the second to remind them that whatever they had was *from* God, and should therefore be to God, making even these injunctions to minister to his self-conceit and pride. Acknowledgment of needs, or confession of sin, there is none in his prayer,—if that can be called prayer, which is wholly wanting in these.<sup>1</sup> ‘Had he then,’ asks Augustine, ‘no sins to confess? Yes, he too had sins; but, perverse and knowing not whither he had come, he was like a sufferer on the table of a surgeon, who should show his sound limbs, and cover his hurts. But let God cover thy hurts, and not thou: for if, ashamed, *thou* seekest to cover them, the physician will not cure them. Let Him cover and cure them; for under the covering of the physician the wound is healed, under the covering of the sufferer it is only concealed; and concealed from whom? from Him to whom all things are known.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augustine (*Serm.* ccxc. 6) : ‘Wast thou come to pray or to praise thyself? Thou saidst that thou haddest all, thou soughtest as one that needed nought. How then didst thou come to pray?’ And *Serm.* cxv. 6: ‘It is not enough not to pray to God, he must praise himself, and moreover insult him who prays.’ Godet: ‘It was not so much a prayer in which he thanked God as a congratulation addressed to himself.’

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Enarr.* 2<sup>a</sup> in *Ps.* xxxi. 2; *Serm.* cccli. 1: ‘The Pharisee rejoiced less in his own health, than in the comparison of it with the diseases of others. It would have been more profitable for him, since he was come to the physician, to show by confession where he was ill, rather than to dissemble as to his wounds and to dare to triumph over the scars of another. It was no wonder, therefore, if the publican, who was not ashamed to show what he deplored, went away cured rather than he.’ Cf. Chrysostom, *De Pœnit.* Hom. ii. 4.

It will aggravate our sense of the moral outrage involved in the Pharisee’s contemptuous reference to his fellow-worshipper, if we keep in mind that in him we behold one who at this very moment was passing into the kingdom of God, who had come, in the fulness of a contrite heart, to make, as seems evidently meant, the first deep confession of his sins past which had ever found utterance from his lips, in whom amid sore pangs the new man was being born. How ugly a thing does the Pharisee’s untimely scorn appear, mingling as a harshest discord with the songs of angels, which at this very moment hailed the lost who was found, the sinner who repented. To him let us now turn. ‘*And the publican, standing afar off,*’ not afar off from God, for the Lord is *nigh* unto them that are of a contrite heart, ‘*would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven,*’ much less then his hands and his face (1 Tim. ii. 8 ; 1 Kin. viii. 54 ; Heb. xii. 12 ; Ps. xxviii. 2), to that dwelling of the Holy One ; for, like the prodigal, he had ‘sinned against heaven’ (Luke xv. 18), would have exclaimed like Ezra, ‘O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens’ (ix. 6). He stood ‘*afar off,*’ not that he was a proselyte or a heathen, or had not full right to approach, for he also was a Jew, but in reverent awe, not venturing to press nearer to the holy place ; for he felt that his sins had set him at a distance from God, and until he had received the atonement, the propitiation which he asks for, he could not presume to draw nigher. Moreover, he ‘*smote upon his breast,*’ an outward sign of inward grief or self-accusation<sup>1</sup> (Nah. ii. 7 ; Luke xxiii. 48), as one judging himself, that he might not be judged of the Lord ; acknowledging the far heavier strokes which might justly light upon him ;

<sup>1</sup> Augustine (*Serm.* lxxvii. 1) : ‘To beat the breast is nothing else than to rebuke that which lies hid in the breast, and by the visible blow to chastise the secret sin ;’ for, as elsewhere he says: ‘What is a penitent save one who is angry with himself?’ and again, ‘The beating of the breast is the contrition of the heart.’ Bengel: ‘Where is sorrow, there is smiting.’

at the same time crying, 'God be merciful<sup>1</sup> to me a sinner,'<sup>2</sup> or 'to me, the sinful one;' for as the Pharisee had singled himself out as the most eminent of saints, or indeed as the one holy in the world, so the publican singles himself out as the chief of sinners, the man in whom all sins have met—a characteristic trait! for who, when first truly convinced of sin, thinks any other man's sins can equal his own (1 Tim. i. 15)?

And he found the mercy which he sought. His prayer, like incense, ascended unto heaven, a sacrifice of sweet savour, while the prayer of the Pharisee was blown back like smoke into his own eyes; for 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble:' 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.'<sup>3</sup> Not merely was he justified in the secret unsearchable counsels of God, but he 'went down to his house justified,' with a sweet sense of forgiveness received shed abroad upon his heart; for God's justification of

<sup>1</sup> Köcher (*Analecta*, in loc.) brings out the force of ἰλάσθητι here: 'The force of the word ἰλάσθητι is such as at once to embrace and to indicate the meritorious cause of propitiation, that is to say the bloody passion and death of Christ.'

<sup>2</sup> Augustine (*In Evang. Joh. Tract. 12*): 'He who confesses his sins and accuses his sins is already acting in union with God. God accuses thy sins: if thou also accuse them, thou wilt join thyself to God. The man and the sinner are, as it were, two things. That thou art called man is of God's work: that thou art called sinner is the work of thine own manhood. Blot out thine own work, that God may make his work whole. Thou must hate in thyself thine own work, and love in thyself the work of God.' Cf. *Serm. xxxvi. 11*; *Enarr. in Ps. lxxvi. 5*; *Enarr. in Ps. xxxix.*: 'He spared not himself, that God might spare him; he accused himself, that God might excuse him; he punished himself, that God might deliver him.'

<sup>3</sup> The received reading, δεδικαιωμένος . . . ἢ ἐκεῖνος, is without the authority of one single uncial MS., being an almost unauthorized emendation in the Elzevir edition. The question lies between ἢ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος, which has most outward authority in its favour, but is hardly intelligible (see Winer, *Gramm.* p. 277), and παρ' ἐκεῖνον, which, with less external support, has yet been received, I believe rightly, in the later critical editions. It is probable that ΠΑΡ having by mistake been written, ΓΑΡ, the insertion of ἢ and the change of ἐκεῖνον into ἐκεῖνος followed, as needful to make the words render up any sense at all.

the sinner is indeed a *transitive* act, and passes from Himself to its object. The Pharisee meanwhile went down from the temple, his prayer ended, with the same cold dead heart with which he went up.<sup>1</sup> By that 'rather than the other' Christ does not mean that the publican *by comparison with the Pharisee* was justified, for there are no degrees in justification, but that he absolutely was justified, was contemplated of God as a righteous man,<sup>2</sup> and the other not;<sup>3</sup> that here the words were fulfilled, 'He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away;' 'Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off' (Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Isai. lviii. 15; Job v.

<sup>1</sup> Crashaw, in his *Divine Epigrams*, sums up the whole very well:

'Two went to pray: oh! rather say,  
One went to brag: th' other to pray.  
One stands up close, and treads on high,  
Where th' other dares not send his eye.  
One nearer to God's altar trod,  
The other to the altar's God.'

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to find the Pauline δικαιούσθαι anticipated here, not merely in the thing, for that of course, but in the word itself, which, in this sense at least, we are wont to attribute exclusively to a later development of doctrine. As was to be expected, it is in the Evangelist who was St. Paul's companion that we find it. On the Pauline element, so plainly to be traced in this Gospel, see Holtzman, *Die Synoptischen Evangelien*, 1863, pp. 389-491.

<sup>3</sup> It is characteristic that this, the very truth which the parable was uttered to teach, should be denied by the chief commentators of the Roman church. Thus Maldonatus: 'He does not mean either that the Publican was actually justified, or that the Pharisee was actually damned, although Euthymius thus understands it.' He might have added greater names; Tertullian, for instance (*Adv. Marc.* iv. 36), affirms 'the one went down reprobate, the other justified;' and Augustine: 'For in the Pharisee pride goes down from the temple as damned, and in the Publican humility goes up before the sight of God as approved.' But Roman Catholic expositors care very little for the Fathers, when the teaching of these clashes with later developments of doctrine. It is only fair to add that Tertullian writes elsewhere (*De Orat.* 13) in the other sense: 'The Publican, who prayed in humiliation and dejection not only of word but of countenance, departed more justified than that most insolent Pharisee.'

11; xl. 11, 12; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6).<sup>1</sup> And the whole parable fitly concludes with words not now for the first time uttered by the Lord, for see Luke xiv. 11, but which would well bear repetition: '*For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*'<sup>2</sup> (cf. Prov. xxix. 23). The saying constitutes a beautiful transition to the bringing of the children to Jesus, the next incident recorded by the Evangelist.

<sup>1</sup> Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. xciii. 12*): 'The one was proud in his good deeds, the other humble in his bad. . . . God was better pleased with humility in bad deeds than with pride in good.' These are striking words, yet will not bear close examination. There may be, and was here, a 'humility *after* bad deeds,' but there is no 'humility *in* bad deeds,' since in *every* sin there is a root of pride out of which it grows, a daring of the creature to lift itself up against the Creator; and again, there can be no *superbia in bonis*, they ceasing to be good, so far as in them this pride mingles.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine: 'Behold, brethren, a mighty miracle. God is high; thou upliftest thyself and He flees from thee; thou humblest thyself, and He descends unto thee;' and of this Pharisee (*Enarr. 2<sup>a</sup> in Ps. xxxi. 4*): 'He would not humble himself by a confession of his wickedness; he was humbled by the weight of God's hand.'