

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,
And many Explanatory Notes.

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JOHN XI. 17–29.

<p>17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had <i>lain</i> in the grave four days already.</p> <p>18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:</p> <p>19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.</p> <p>20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat <i>still</i> in the house.</p> <p>21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.</p> <p>22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give <i>it</i> thee.</p> <p>23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.</p>	<p>24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.</p> <p>25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:</p> <p>26 And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?</p> <p>27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.</p> <p>28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee,</p> <p>29 As soon as she heard <i>that</i>, she arose quickly, and came unto him.</p>
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THERE is a grand simplicity about this passage, which is almost spoilt by any human exposition. To comment on it seems like gilding gold or painting lilies. Yet it throws much light on a subject which we can never understand too well; that is, the true character of Christ's people. The portraits of Christians in the Bible are faithful likenesses. They show us saints just as they are.

We learn, firstly, *what a strange mixture of grace and weakness is to be found even in the hearts of true believers.*

We see this strikingly illustrated in the language used by Martha and Mary. Both these holy women had faith enough to say, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Yet neither of them seems to have remembered that the death of Lazarus did not depend on Christ's absence, and that our Lord, had He thought fit, could have prevented his death with a word, without coming to Bethany.—Martha had knowledge enough to say, "I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God wilt give it Thee,—I know that my brother shall rise again at the last day,—I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."—But even she could get no further. Her dim eyes and trembling hands could not grasp the grand truth that He who stood before her had the keys of life and death, and that in her Master dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colos. ii. 9.) She saw indeed, but through a glass darkly. She knew, but only in part. She believed, but her faith was mingled with much unbelief. Yet both Martha and Mary were genuine children of God, and true Christians.

These things are graciously written for our learning. It is good to remember what true Christians really are. Many and great are the mistakes into which people fall, by forming a false estimate of the Christian's character. Many are the bitter things which people write against themselves, by expecting to find in their hearts what cannot be found on this side of heaven.

Let us settle it in our minds that saints on earth are not perfect angels, but only converted sinners. They are sinners renewed, changed, sanctified, no doubt; but they are yet sinners, and will be till they die. Like Martha and Mary, their faith is often entangled with much unbelief, and their grace compassed round with much infirmity. Happy is that child of God who understands these things, and has learned to judge rightly both of himself and others. Rarely indeed shall we find the saint who does not often need that prayer, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief."

We learn, secondly, what need many believers have of *clear views of Christ's person, office, and power*. This is a point which is forcibly brought out in the well-known sentence which our Lord addressed to Martha. In reply to her vague and faltering expression of belief in the resurrection at the last day, He proclaims the glorious truth, "I am the resurrection and the life;"—"I, even I, thy Master, am He that has the keys of life and death in His hands." And then He presses on her once more that old lesson, which she had doubtless often heard, but never fully realized: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

There is matter here which deserves the close consideration of all true Christians. Many of them complain of want of sensible comfort in their religion. They do not feel the inward peace which they desire. Let them know that vague and indefinite views of Christ are too often the cause of all their perplexities. They must try to see more clearly the great object on which their faith rests. They must grasp more firmly His love and power toward them that believe, and the riches He has laid up for them even now in this world. We are many of us sadly like Martha. A little general knowledge of Christ as the only Saviour is often all that we possess. But of the fulness that dwells in Him, of His resurrection, His priesthood, His intercession, His un-failing compassion, we have tasted little or nothing at all. They are things of which our Lord might well say to many, as he did to Martha, "Believest thou this?"

Let us take shame to ourselves that we have named the name of Christ so long, and yet know so little about Him. What right have we to wonder that we feel so little sensible comfort in our Christianity? Our slight and imperfect knowledge of Christ is the true reason of our discomfort. Let the time past suffice us to have been lazy students in Christ's school; let the time to come find us more diligent in trying to "know Him and the power of His resurrection." (Philip. iii. 10.) If true Christians would only strive, as St. Paul says, to "comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," they would be amazed at the discoveries they would make. They would soon find, like Hagar, that there are wells of water near them of which they had

no knowledge. They would soon discover that there is more heaven to be enjoyed on earth than they had ever thought possible. The root of a happy religion is clear, distinct, well-defined knowledge of Jesus Christ. More knowledge would have saved Martha many sighs and tears. Knowledge alone no doubt, if unsanctified, only “puffeth up.” (1 Cor. viii. 1.) Yet without clear knowledge of Christ in all His offices we cannot expect to be established in the faith, and steady in the time of need.

NOTES. JOHN XI. 17–29.

17.—[*Then when Jesus came.*] We are left entirely to conjecture as to the time spent by our Lord in His journey from Bethabara to Bethany. We do not know anything certain of the place where He was abiding, except that it was beyond Jordan. Probably it was between twenty and thirty miles from Bethany, and this distance, to those who travel on foot, would be at least a day’s journey.

[*He found...lain...grave...four days already.*] The Greek form of language here is peculiar, and a literal translation would be impossible. It would be, “He found him being already four days in the grave.” It is highly probable that Lazarus was buried the same day that he died. In a country like Palestine, with a hot climate, it is quite impossible to keep corpses long unburied, without danger and discomfort to the living. A man may talk to his friend one day, and find him buried the next day.

One thing is abundantly proved by this verse. Lazarus must certainly have been dead, and not in a trance or swoon. A person lying in a grave for four days, all reasonable people would admit, must have been a dead man.

The various forms of death which our Lord is recorded to have triumphed over should not be forgotten. Jairus’ daughter was just dead; the son of the widow of Nain was being carried to the grave; Lazarus, the most extraordinary case of all, had been four days in the tomb.

The expression, “He found,” in this verse, must not be thought to imply any surprise. We know that our Lord begun His journey from Bethabara with a full knowledge that Lazarus was dead. What “He found” applies to Lazarus therefore, and to the precise length of time that he had been in the grave. He was not only dead, but buried.

We can well imagine what a sorrowful time those four days must have been to Martha and Mary, and how many thoughts must have crossed their minds as to the reason of our Lord’s delay, as to the day He would come, and the like. Nothing so wears us down as suspense and uncertainty. Yet of all graces there is none so glorifying to God and sanctifying to the heart as that of patience or quietly waiting. How long Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David were kept waiting! Jesus loves to show the world that His people can wait. Martha and Mary had to exemplify this. Well if we can do likewise!

Gomarus discusses at length the curious question, where the soul of Lazarus was during those four days. He dismisses as unscriptural the idea that it was yet in the body, and seems to hold that it was in Paradise.

The “four days” are easily accounted for, if we remember the time occupied by the messenger from Bethany, the two days’ delay at Bethabara, and the journey to Bethany.

18.—[*Now Bethany...nigh...Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.*] This verse shows that John wrote for readers who were not acquainted with Palestine. According to his manner he gives a parenthetical description of the situation of Bethany, partly to show how very near to Jerusalem the wonderful miracle he relates was worked,—within a walk of the temple, and almost within view; and partly to account for the number of the Jews who came from

Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary.

The distance, fifteen furlongs, is rather less than two miles. The use of the expression, "about," shows that the Holy Ghost condescends to use man's common form of language in describing things, and that such expressions are not inconsistent with inspiration. (See John ii. 6, and vi. 19.)

- 19.—[*And many Jews...came...Mary.*] This sentence would be more literally rendered, "Many from among the Jews had come to those around Martha and Mary." Who these Jews were it is impossible to say, except that they evidently came from Jerusalem. One can hardly suppose that they were the leaders and rulers of the Pharisees. Such men would not be likely to care for friends of Jesus, and would hardly have condescended to visit Martha and Mary, who were doubtless known to be His disciples. Of course it is possible that Simon the leper, in whose house Lazarus died, may have been a man of consideration, and that the Jews may have come out of respect to him. At any rate it is clear that those who saw the stupendous miracle of this chapter were Jerusalem Jews, and were "many," and not few.—The expression, "Those around Martha and Mary," is a form of language not uncommon in Greek, and is probably rightly translated in our version. It can hardly mean, "the women who had come to mourn with Martha and Mary," though it is well known that women were the chief mourners at funerals. It is, however, only fair to say that Beza decidedly holds that the women and female friends who had come to mourn with Mary and Martha are meant in this verse.

[*To comfort them concerning their brother.*] This appears to have been a common practice among the Jews. When any one died, friends and neighbours assembled for several days at the house of the deceased, to mourn with and comfort the relatives. Lightfoot specially mentions it. The same custom prevails in many parts of the world at the present day: Hindostan and Ireland are instances.

We cannot doubt that many of these Jews came to Martha and Mary from form and custom, and not from any genuine sympathy or kind feeling, much less from any unity of spiritual taste. Yet it is striking to observe how God blesses even the semblance of sympathy. By coming they saw Christ's greatest miracle. If unbelief can sympathize, how much more should grace.

One thing at any rate seems very clearly proved by this verse. Whatever was the rank or position of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, they were well-known people, and anything that happened in their house at Bethany was soon public news in Jerusalem. Had they been strangers from Galilee, the thing named in this verse would not have been written.

Chrysostom thinks the Evangelist mentioned the Jews coming to comfort Martha and Mary, as one of the many circumstances proving that Lazarus was really dead. They evidently thought him dead, or they would not have come.

Lightfoot gives a long and curious account of the customs of the Jews about comforting mourners. He says that "thirty days were allotted for the time of mourning. The three first days were for weeping; seven days for lamentation; and thirty days for intermission from washing or shaving. The beds in the house of mourning were all taken down and laid on the ground, as soon as the coffin left the house. The comforter sat on the floor; the bereaved sat chief. The comforter might not say a word till the chief mourner broke silence."

Poole observes that the mourning for Jacob was forty days, for Aaron and Moses, thirty days. (Gen. 1. 3; Num. xx. 29; Dent. xxxiv. 8.)

- 20.—[*Then Martha...heard...Jesus...coming...met him.*] The Greek word for "was coming," would have been more literally translated, "is coming," or "comes," in the present tense. It then gives the idea that Martha received from some friend, servant, or watchman, who was on the lookout on the road from Jordan, the message long looked for, "Jesus is in sight:" "He is coming." She then hurried out, and met our Lord outside the village. The Greek is

simply, “met Him; “and “went” is needless.

Bullinger thinks that Martha, with characteristic activity, was bustling after domestic duties, and heard from some one that Jesus was coming, and ran to meet Him, without going to tell Mary.

[*But Mary sat still...house.*] While Martha hurried out to meet Jesus, Mary continued sitting in the house. Martha’s “met” is a perfect tense; Mary’s “sat” is an imperfect. It is impossible not to see the characteristic temperament of each sister coming out here, and doubtless it is written for our learning. Martha—active, stirring, busy, demonstrative—cannot wait, but runs impulsively to meet Jesus. Mary—quiet, gentle, pensive, meditative, contemplative, meek—sits passively at home. Yet I venture to think that of the two sisters, Martha here appears to most advantage. There is such a thing as being so crushed and stunned by our affliction that we do not adorn our profession under it. Is there not something of this in Mary’s conduct throughout this chapter? There is a time to stir, as well as to sit still; and here, by not stirring, Mary certainly missed hearing our Lord’s glorious declaration about Himself. I would not be mistaken in saying this. Both these holy women were true disciples; yet if Mary showed more grace on a former occasion than Martha, I think Martha here showed more than Mary.

Let us never forget that there are differences of temperament among believers, and let us make due allowance for others if they are not quite like ourselves. (There are believers who are quiet, passive, silent, and meditative; and believers who are active, stirring, and demonstrative. The well-ordered Church must find room, place, and work for all. We need Marys as well as Marthas, and Marthas as well as Marys.

Nothing brings out character so much as sickness and affliction. If we would know how much grace believers have, we should see them in trouble.

Let us remember that “sitting” was the attitude of a mourner, among the Jews. Thus Job’s friends “sat down with him on the ground.” (Job ii. 13.)

Henry remarks: “In the day of affliction Mary’s contemplative and reserved temper proved a snare to her, made her less able to grapple with grief, and disposed her to melancholy. It will be our wisdom to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages of our natural temper.”

21.—[*Then said Martha...if thou...not died.*] This is the first account of Martha’s feelings. It was the uppermost thought in her mind, and with honest impulsiveness she brings it out at once. It is easy to detect in it a strange mixture of emotions.

Here is a passion, not unmixed with a tinge of reproach. “I wish you had been here: why did you not come sooner? You might have prevented my brother’s death.”

Here is love, confidence, and devotion creeping out. “I wish you had been here. We loved you so much. We depended so entirely on your love. We felt if you had been here all would be ordered well.”

Here is faith. “I wish you had been here. I believe you could have healed my brother, and kept death from him.”

Nevertheless there is something of unbelief at bottom. Martha forgets that the bodily presence of Jesus was not necessary in order to cure her brother, or to prevent his death. She must have known what our Lord did for the centurion’s servant, and the ruler of Capernaum. He had but to speak the word anywhere and Lazarus would have recovered. But memories often fail in time of trouble.

Ferus remarks how apt we all are to say, as Martha, “If God had been here, if Christ had been present, this would not have happened; as if Christ was not always present, and everywhere near His people!”

Henry remarks that in cases like Martha’s, “we are apt to add to our trouble by fancying what might have been. If such a method had been taken, such a physician employed, my

friend had not died! which is more than we know. And what good does it do? When God's will is done, our business is to submit."

- 22.—[*But I know...even now...ask...give it thee.*] In these words poor Martha's faith and hope shine clearly and unmistakably, though not without serious blemishes. "Even now," she says, "though my brother is dead and lying in the grave, I know, and feel confident, from the many proofs I have seen of Thy power, that whatsoever things Thou mayest ask of God, God will give them to Thee. I must therefore even now cling to the hope that in some way or other Thou wilt help us."

The faith of these words is plain and unmistakable. Martha hopes, desperately against hope, that somehow all will be right, though she knows not how. She has strong confidence in the efficacy of our Lord's prayers.

The presence of dim views and indistinct apprehensions of Christ in Martha's mind is as evident as her faith. She speaks as if our Lord was a human prophet only, and had no independent power of His own, as God, to work a miracle, and as if He could not command a cure, but must ask God for it, as Elisha did. She must have strangely forgotten the manner in which our Lord had often worked His miracles. Chrysostom remarks, that she speaks as if Christ was only "some virtuous and approved mortal."

Let us note here that there may be true faith and love toward Christ in a person, and yet much dimness and ignorance mixed up with it. Love to Christ, in Christian women especially, is often much clearer than faith and knowledge. Hence women are more easily led astray by false doctrine than men. It is of the utmost importance to remember that there are degrees of faith and knowledge. How small a degree of faith may save, and how much of ignorance may be found even in one who is on the way to heaven, are deep points which probably the last day alone will fully disclose.

Let us do Martha the justice to observe that she shows great confidence in the value and efficacy of prayer.

- 23.—[*Jesus saith...brother...rise again.*] These words, the first spoken by our Lord after arriving at Bethany, are very remarkable. They sound as if He saw the vague nature of Martha's faith, and would gradually lead her on to clearer and more distinct views of Himself, His office, and Person. He therefore begins by the broad, general promise, "Thy brother shall be raised up." He does not say when or how. If his disciples heard him say this, they might have some clue to his meaning, as He had said, "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." But Martha had not heard that.

Let us note that our Lord loves to draw out the faith and knowledge of His people by degrees. If He told us everything at once, plainly, and without any room for misunderstanding, it would not be good for us. Exercise is useful for all our graces.

Rollock sees in this verse a signal example of our Lord's unwillingness to "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax." He nourishes and encourages the little spark of faith which Martha had.

- 24.—[*Martha...I know...resurrection...last day.*] Martha here reveals the extent of her faith and knowledge. She knows and feels sure that her brother will be raised again from the dead in the last day, when the resurrection takes place. This, as a pious Jewess, she had learned from the old Testament Scriptures, and as a Christian believer, she had gathered even more distinctly from the teaching of Jesus. But she does not say, "I know and feel confident" of anything more. She may perhaps have had some glimmering of hope that Jesus would do something, but she does not say, "I know." General faith is easier than particular.

We see from this verse that the resurrection of the body formed part of the creed of the Jewish Church, and of the faith of our Lord's disciples. Martha's "*I know*," sounds as if she remembered the words of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." What she did not understand, or had failed to remember, was our Lord's peculiar office as Lord of the resurrection.

We cannot now understand how she can have failed to hear what our Lord had said before the Sanhedrim. (John v. 25-29.) If she had, she evidently had not comprehended it. Even our Lord's teaching was often not taken in by His people! How much less must His ministers expect all their sermons to be understood!

To my eyes there is an evident tone of disappointment about Martha's speech. It is as though she said, "I know, of course, that he will rise again at last; but that is cold comfort. It is a far-distant event. I want nearer and better consolation."

Hutcheson remarks: "It is no uncommon thing to see men believing great things that are far off, and about which they have no present exercise, when yet their faith proves weak in the matter of a present trial, though less difficult than that which they profess to believe."

25.—[*Jesus said...I am...resurrection...life.*] In this and the following verses, our Lord corrects Martha's feeble and inadequate notions, and sets before her more exalted views of Himself. As Chrysostom says, "He shows her that He needed none to help Him." He tells her that He is not merely a human teacher of the resurrection, but the Divine Author of all resurrection, whether spiritual or physical, and the Root and Fountain of all life. "I am that high and holy One who, by taking man's nature upon Me, have ennobled his body, and made its resurrection possible. I am the great First Cause and Procurer of man's resurrection, the Conqueror of death, and the Saviour of the body. I am the great Spring and Source of all life, and whatever life any one has, eternal, spiritual, physical, is all owing to Me. All that are raised from the grave will be raised by Me. All that are spiritually quickened are quickened by Me. Separate from Me there is no life at all. Death came by Adam: life comes by Me."

All must feel that this is a deep saying, so deep that we see but a little of it. One thing only is very clear and plain: none could use this language but one who knew and felt that He was very God. No prophet or Apostle ever spoke in this way.

I do not feel sure that the two first words of this verse do not contain a latent reference to the great title of Jehovah, "I am." The Greek quite permits it.

[*He that believeth...me...dead...live.*] This sentence receives two interpretations. Some, as Calvin and Hutcheson, hold that "dead" here means *spiritually* dead. Others, as Bullinger, Gualter, Brentitus, Musculus, hold that "dead" means *bodily* dead.—With these last I entirely agree, partly because of the point that our Lord is pressing on Martha, partly because of the awkwardness of speaking of a believer as "dead." Moreover, the expression is a verb,—“though he has died,” and not an adjective,—“is a dead person.” The sense I believe to be this: "He that believes in Me, even if he has died, and been laid in the grave, like thy brother, shall yet live, and be raised again through my power. Faith in Me unites such an one to the Fountain of all life, and death can only hold him for a short time. As surely as I, the Head, have life, and cannot be kept a prisoner by the grave, so surely all my members, believing in Me, shall live also."

26.—[*And whosoever liveth...believeth...never die.*] In this verse our Lord seems to me to speak of living believers, as in the last verse He had spoken of dead ones. Here, then, He makes the sweeping declaration, that "every one who believes in Him shall never die:" that is, he "shall not die eternally," as the Burial Service of the Church of England has it. The second death shall have no power over him. The sting of bodily death shall be taken away. He partakes of a life that never ends, from the moment that he believes in Christ. His body may be laid in the grave for a little season, but only to be raised after a while to glory; and his soul lives on uninterruptedly for evermore, and, like the great risen Head, dieth no more.

That there are great depths in this and the preceding sentence, every reverent believer will always admit. We feel that we do not see the bottom. The difficulty probably arises from the utter inability of our gross, carnal natures to comprehend the mysteries of life, death, and resurrection of any kind. One thing is abundantly clear, and that is the im-

portance of faith in Christ. "He that believeth" is the man who though dead shall live, and shall never die. Let us take care that we believe, and then all shall one day be plain. The simple questions, "What is life, and what is death?" contain enough to silence the wisest philosopher.

[*Believest thou this?*] This searching question is the application to Martha of the great doctrines just laid down. "Thou believest that the dead will rise. It is well. But dost thou believe that I am the Author of resurrection, and the source of life? Dost thou realize that I, thy Teacher and Friend, am very God, and have the keys of death and the grave in my hands? Hast thou yet got hold of this? If thou hast not, and only knowest me as a prophet sent to teach good and comfortable things, thou hast only received half the truth."

Home questions like these are very useful. How little we most of us know what we really believe, and what we do not; what we have grasped and made our own, and what we hold loosely! Above all, how little we know what we really believe about Christ!

Melancthon points out how immensely important it is to know whether we really have faith, and believe what we hold.

27.—[*She saith...Yea, Lord; I believe*] Poor Martha, pressed home with the mighty question of the last verse, seems hardly able to give any but a vague answer. In truth, we cannot expect that she would speak distinctly about that which she only understood imperfectly. She therefore falls back on a general answer, in which she states simply, yet decidedly, what was the extent of her creed.

Our English word, "I believe," hardly gives the full sense of the Greek. It would be literally, "I have believed, and do believe." This is my faith, and has been for a long time.

Augustine, Bede, Bullinger, Chemnitius, Gualter, Maldonatus, Quesnel, and Henry, think that the first word of Martha's reply is a full and explicit declaration of faith in everything our Lord had just said. "Yes, Lord, I do believe Thou art the resurrection and the life," etc. I cannot see this myself. The idea seems contradicted by Martha's subsequent conduct at the grave.

Musculus strongly maintains that Martha's confession, good as it was, was vague and imperfect. Lampe takes much the same view.

[*Thou art the Christ...Son of God...came...world.*] Here is Martha's statement of her belief. It contains three great points: (1) that Jesus was the Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah; (2) that He was the Son of God; (3) that He was the promised Redeemer, who was to come into the world. She goes no further, and probably she could not. Yet considering the time she lived in, the universal unbelief of the Jewish nation, and the wonderful difference in the views of believers before the crucifixion and after, I regard it as a noble and glorious confession, and even fuller than Peter's, in Matthew xvi. 16. Melancthon points out the great superiority of Martha's faith to that of the most intellectual heathen, in a long and interesting passage.

It is easy to say that Martha's faith was rather vague, and that she ought to have seen everything more clearly. But we at this period of time, and with all our advantages, are very poor judges of such a matter. Dark and dim as her views were, it was a great thing for a solitary Jewish woman to have got hold of so much truth, when within two miles, in Jerusalem, all who held such a creed as hers were excommunicated and persecuted.

Let us note that people's views of truth may be very defective on some points, and yet they may have the root of the matter in them. Martha evidently did not yet fully realize that Christ was the resurrection and the life: but she had learned the alphabet of Christianity,—Christ's Messiahship and Divinity, and doubtless learned more in time. We must not condemn people hastily or harshly, because they do not see all at once.

Chrysostom says: "Martha seems to me not to understand Christ's saying. She was conscious it was some great thing, but did not perceive the whole meaning, so that when asked

one thing she answered another.”

Toletus remarks: “Martha thought she believed everything Christ said, while she believed Him to be the true promised Messiah. And she did truly believe, but her faith was implicit and general. It is just as if some rustic, being questioned about some proposition of faith which he does not quite comprehend, replies, ‘I believe in the Holy Church.’ So here Martha said, ‘I believe, Lord, that Thou art the true Christ, and that all things Thou sayest are true;’ and yet she did not distinctly perceive them.” This is a remarkable testimony from a Romanist.

Ought we not, perhaps, to make some allowance for the distress and affliction in which Martha was when she made her confession? Is it fair to expect a person in her position to speak as distinctly and precisely as one not in trouble?

- 28.—[*And when she had said this, etc.*] The affection of Martha for her sister appears here. Once assured that her Master was come, and perhaps somewhat cheered by the few words He spoke, she hastens home to tell Mary that Jesus was come, and had called for her. We are not told expressly that Jesus had mentioned Mary, but we may suppose that He did, and had asked where she was.

The word “secretly” may be applied to the word which follows, if we like, and it would then mean that “Martha called Mary, saying secretly.” This is probably the correct rendering.

The word rendered “is come” would be more literally translated, “is present: is actually here.”

The expression, “the Master,” is probably the name by which our Lord was familiarly known by the family at Bethany. It is literally, “the Teacher.”

Bullinger remarks that the word “secretly” is purposely inserted, to show that the Jews who followed Mary had no idea that Jesus was come. Had they known it, he thinks, they would not have followed her, and so would not have seen the miracle.

Hall evidently thinks that Martha told Mary “secretly,” for fear of the unbelieving Jews who were among the comforters. He remarks: “Christianity doth not bid us abate anything of our wariness and honest policy: yea, it requires us to have no less of the serpent than of the dove.”

- 29.—[*As soon as she heard, etc.*] The two last words in this sentence are both in the present tense. It would be more literally rendered, “She, when she heard, arises quickly and comes to Him.” It is evident, I think, that the sudden movement of Mary was not caused by hearing that Jesus was come, but that Jesus called for her.

It is not unlikely, from the word “arose,” that Mary was lying or sitting prostrate on the ground, under the pressure of grief. We may also well suppose that our Lord, who doubtless knew her state, asked for her, in order to rouse her to exertion. When David heard that his child was dead, and nothing left for him to do but to be resigned, he “arose from off the earth.” (2 Sam. xii. 20.)