

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,
And many Explanatory Notes.

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ST. JOHN. VOL. II.

LONDON:
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY, 23, HOLLES STREET,
CAVENDISH SQUARE.
IPSWICH: WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

1869AD

JOHN IX. 26-41.

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as *for* this *fellow*, we know not from whence he is.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

39 ¶ And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which *see* not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

40 And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

41 Jesus said unto them. If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

WE see in these verses *how much wiser the poor sometimes are than the rich*. The man whom our Lord healed of his blindness was evidently a person of very humble condition. It is written that he was one who "sat and begged." (See v. 8.) Yet he saw things which the proud rulers of the Jews could not see, and would not receive. He saw in our Lord's miracle an unanswerable proof of our Lord's divine commission. "If this Man were not of God," he cries, "He could do nothing." In fact from the day of his cure his position was completely altered. He had eyes, and the Pharisees were blind.

The same thing may be seen in other places of Scripture. The servants of Pharaoh saw "the finger of God" in the plagues of Egypt, when their master's heart was hardened. The servants of Naaman saw the wisdom of Elisha's advice, when their master was turning away in a rage. The high, the great, and the noble are often the last to learn spiritual lessons. Their possessions and their position often blind the eyes of their understanding, and keep them back from the kingdom of God. It is written that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Cor. i. 26.)

The Christian poor man never need be ashamed of his poverty. It is a sin to be proud, and worldly-minded, and unbelieving; but it is no sin to be poor. The very riches which many long to possess are often veils over the eyes of men's souls, and prevent their seeing Christ. The teaching of the Holy Ghost is more frequently to be seen among men of low degree, than among men of rank and education. The words of our Lord are continually

proved most true: “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.”—“Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Mark x. 23. Matt. xi. 25.)

We see, secondly, in these verses, *how cruelly and unjustly unconverted men will sometimes treat those who disagree with them*. When the Pharisees could not frighten the blind man who had been cured, they expelled him from the Jewish Church. Because he manfully refused to deny the evidence of his own senses, they excommunicated him and put him to an open shame. They cast him out “as a heathen man and a publican.”

The temporal injury that such treatment did to a poor Jew was very great indeed. It cut him off from the outward privileges of the Jewish Church. It made him an object of scorn and suspicion among all true Israelites. But it could do no harm to his soul. That which wicked men bind on earth is not bound in heaven. “The curse causeless shall not come.” (Prov. xxvi. 2.)

The children of God in every age have only too frequently met with like treatment. Excommunication, persecution, and imprisonment have generally been favourite weapons with ecclesiastical tyrants. Unable, like the Pharisees, to answer arguments, they have resorted to violence and injustice. Let the child of God console himself with the thought that there is a true Church out of which no man can cast him, and a Church-membership which no earthly power can take away. He only is blessed whom Christ calls blessed; and he only is accursed whom Christ shall pronounce accursed at the last day.

We see, thirdly, in these verses, *how great is the kindness and condescension of Christ*. No sooner was this poor blind man cast out of the Jewish Church than Jesus finds him and speaks words of comfort. He knew full well how heavy an affliction excommunication was to an Israelite, and at once cheered him with kind words. He now revealed Himself more fully to this man than He did to any one except the Samaritan woman. In reply to the question, “Who is the Son of God?” He says plainly, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.”

We have here one among many beautiful illustrations of the mind of Christ. He sees all that His people go through for His sake, and feels for all, from the highest to the lowest. He keeps account of all their losses, crosses, and persecutions. “Are they not all written in His book?” (Psal. lvi. 8.) He knows how to come to their hearts with consolation in their time of need, and to speak peace to them when all men seem to hate them. The time when men forsake us is often the very time when Christ draws near, saying, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isai. xli. 10.)

We see, lastly, in these verses, *how dangerous it is to possess knowledge*,

if we do not make a good use of it. The rulers of the Jews were fully persuaded that they knew all religious truth. They were indignant at the very idea of being ignorant and devoid of spiritual eyesight. “*Are we blind also?*” they cried. And then came the mighty sentence, “*If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*”

Knowledge undoubtedly is a very great blessing. The man who cannot read, and is utterly ignorant of Scripture, is in a pitiable condition. He is at the mercy of any false teacher who comes across him, and may be taught to take up any absurd creed, or to follow any vicious practice. Almost any education is better than no education at all.

But when knowledge only sticks in a man’s head, and has no influence over his heart and life, it becomes a most perilous possession. And when, in addition to this, its possessor is self-conceited and self-satisfied, and fancies he knows everything, the result is one of the worst states of soul into which man can fall. There is far more hope about him who says, “I am a poor blind sinner and want God to teach me,” than about him who is ever saying, “I know it, I know it, I am not ignorant,” and yet cleaves to his sins.—The sin of that man “remaineth.”

Let us use diligently whatever religious knowledge we possess, and ask continually that God would give us more. Let us never forget that the devil himself is a creature of vast head-knowledge, and yet none the better for it, because it is not rightly used. Let our constant prayer be that which David so often sent up in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, “Lord, teach me Thy statutes:—give me understanding:—unite my heart to fear Thy name.”

NOTES. JOHN IX. 26-41.

26.—[*Then said they...How opened...eyes.*] The enemies of our Lord renewed their examination of the healed man, by inquiries into the manner in which our Lord had opened his eyes. Their previous inquiry had been directed to the point, “Who had done the miracle?” They now ask “How it was done?”

The folly of wicked men comes out remarkably in this renewed examination. Had they let the matter drop at this point, they would not have exposed their own malevolent and unreasoning spirit. They madly rush headlong on, and are put to open shame by a poor and humble Jew.

Let it be noted, that the word we have translated “then,” is not so strong in the Greek, and does not mark time, but simply connects the verse with the preceding one. “And they said to him again.”

Let it be noted, that faith only looks to the *result*, and does not trouble itself about the *manner* in which it is brought about. Unbelief, on the contrary, refuses to look at the *result*, and excuses itself by raising difficulties about the *manner*.

Let it be noted that in every age Satan never so completely outwits himself and defeats his own purpose, as when he presses persecution and annoyance against weak Christians. Hundreds learn lessons under the pressure of incessant attacks, which otherwise they would

never learn at all. The very fact of being attacked calls out latent thought, energy, and courage.

- 27.—[*He answered them, etc.*] The patience of the healed man evidently began to be exhausted at this stage of the proceedings. This senseless repetition of questions, this redoubled effort to make him disbelieve his own senses, became more than he could bear. He seems to say, “I have told the whole story once, and I have nothing to add to it. Yet when I told it, you evidently did not listen to me. What is the use of telling it again? Why do you want to hear it a second time?”—“Ye would not hear,” is of course equivalent to “ye would not believe.”

The expressions “would ye” and “will ye,” are both the same verb in the Greek, and would be more literally rendered as a distinct verb, “do ye will.”

The last clause can hardly be taken in any other sense than a sarcastic one. It could hardly be a grave question. It was the natural sarcastic remark of a man wearied, irritated, and provoked by a long-drawn teasing repetition of questions. “One might almost think, from your repeated anxious questions, that you yourselves want to be Christ’s disciples.”

Chrysostom remarks, “How strong is truth, and how weak is falsehood! Truth, though she take hold only of ordinary men, maketh them appear glorious; falsehood, even with the strong, makes them appear weak.”

- 28.—[*Then they reviled him, etc.*] Here we see how one sharp word leads to another. Sarcasm from the lips of the healed man, produces abuse and reviling from his examiners. They were evidently indignant at the very idea of such wise men as they were becoming disciples of Jesus. “Thou, poor ignorant creature, and such as thou, art disciples of Jesus. But we are not such fools. We are disciples of Moses, and want no other teacher.” And yet in their blindness they did not see, and would not understand, that Jesus was the very Saviour of whom Moses had written, and that every true disciple of Moses must necessarily be a disciple of Jesus. So easy it is to talk high-sounding ignorant phrases in religion, and yet be utterly in the dark!

Brentius remarks how ready men are to maintain that they hold the old religion of their fathers, while in reality they do not know what it was. Thus the Pharisees talked of Moses, as if Moses was contrary to Christ. The Romanist does just the same when he talks of the “old religion.” He knows not what the old religion was.

Ferus points out how many of the words of Moses’ law these men forgot and despised, even while they boasted of being his “disciples;” “as Levit. xix. 14; Exod. xxiii. 7.

- 29.—[*We know that God spake, etc.*] The meaning of this sentence seems to be, “We know that God commissioned Moses to be a lawgiver and teacher, and that, in following Moses, we are pleasing God. But as for this Jesus, we know not who has commissioned Him, or who sent Him to teach, or by what authority. He preaches and works miracles. In a word, we see no proof that He has come from God. We are not satisfied that He has any Divine commission.”

The expression “from whence He is,” in this place cannot be interpreted as meaning “from what place.” It must signify our Lord’s commission,—who sent Him, and by whose authority He acts. So in another place, “the baptism of John, whence was it?” (Luke xx. 4), means “whence had it authority?”

We should note here, how firmly implanted it was in the Jewish mind that Moses had received a revelation from God. “God spake unto Moses.”

- 30.—[*The man answered, etc.*] In this verse the healed man begins a simple, yet unanswerable argument, which completely silenced his examiners.—“There is something very wonderful in this. It is an unmistakable fact that this Person has opened my eyes. He has, in short, worked an astonishing miracle; and yet, in the face of this miracle, you say that you do not

know whence He is, or who gave Him His power.”

The word “ye,” is here emphatical. “You, who are learned men, and rulers, and teachers, might have been expected to know whence this man comes.”

31.—[*Now we know that, etc.*] In this verse the healed man continues his chain of reasoning.—“We all know, and it is an admitted principle among us, that God does not hear the prayer of wicked people, and give wicked people power to work miracles. The only people whom He hears and enables to do great works, are people who fear God, and habitually do God’s will.”

The expression “now,” in this verse, perhaps conveys too strong an idea of the meaning of the Greek word. It would be more literally rendered, “and we know; “and would thus simply carry on one unbroken chain of argument.

The principle that “God heareth not sinners,” is here stated by the man as a great incontrovertible doctrine, which all Jews knew and admitted. It is hardly necessary to say that it did not mean that God is unwilling to hear the prayers of sinners who feel their sins, and cry to Him for pardon. It applies to sinners who do not feel their sins, and are living in sin, and are impenitent. Such persons God does not look on with favour, and will not enable to do miracles. That God will not hear impenitent sinners, is taught in such texts as Job xxxvii. 9; xxxv. 12; Psalm xviii. 41; xxxiv. 15; lxvi. 18; Prov. i. 28; xv. 29; xxviii. 9; Isa. 1. 15; Jer. xi. 11; xiv. 12; Ezek. viii. 18; Micah iii. 4; Zech. vii. 13. The Pharisees knew this, and could not possibly deny it.

The expression “a worshipper of God,” means something far more than mere outward worship. It is equivalent to a God-fearing man,—one who really honours and reverences God.

The expression “doeth His will,” means one who habitually lives in the practice of God’s preceptive will,—the things that God commands.

Brentius illustrates this verse by contrasting God’s readiness to hear Elijah when he worked a miracle on Carmel, with the useless cries of the worshippers of Baal on the same occasion.

Ecolampadius observes, that hitherto the healed man evidently saw nothing higher in our Lord than a very good man, whose prayers God would hear. He did not yet see in Him one who wrought miracles by His own Divine power.

Musculus observes, that it is the man who not only “knows” God’s will, but practically “does” it, and obeys it, whom God hears.

32, 33.—[*Since the world began, etc.*] These two verses contain the conclusion of the healed man’s argument. The sense is as follows: “To open the eyes of one born blind is a work so entirely beyond the power of man, that no man has ever done it since the world began. Divine power alone could effect it. But this Man has done this work, and therefore must evidently be one sent and commissioned by God. If He were not of God He could do nothing miraculous, and at any rate nothing so miraculous as my cure.”

The expression “since the world began,” would be more literally rendered, “from the age of the world:” *i.e.*, from the beginning of. It is like Acts iii. 21, and xv. 18, and Ephes. iii. 9.

The concluding argument of the healed man is precisely that of Nicodemus, when he came to our Lord by night. “No man can do these miracles except God be with him.” (John iii. 2.)

Augustine remarks, “This was frankly, firmly, and truly spoken. These things that were done by the Lord, how should they be done by any but God?”

Brentius shows here the value of miracles as an evidence of Christ's Divine mission. He also shows that the miracles so-called, said to be worked by magicians and false teachers, are either impositions, or else are wrought in support of something contrary to Scripture, and are therefore not worthy of attention. He finally remarks, that if we are not to believe an angel speaking against the Gospel, much less should we believe a miracle, if worked to confirm something contrary to Scripture.

Toletus remarks that at any rate there is no case in Scripture of any open sinner procuring a miracle to be worked in reply to his prayer.

Whitby remarks, "We see here a blind man and unlearned, judging more rightly of Divine things than the whole learned Council of the Pharisees! Hence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops, and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions, these great overseers being sometimes guilty of great over-sights."

There is no weight in the objection raised by some modern German critics, that eminent surgeons have effected the restoration of sight to people born blind. If they have, it has certainly never been done instantaneously, and without the use of outward means, as in this man's case.

34.—[*They answered, etc.*] The argument of the healed man was one which the Pharisees felt to be unanswerable. Silenced before the whole Council they turn on the speaker with anger and abuse. "Thou art a miserable wicked creature, entirely born in sin, and dost thou pretend to know better than us, and to teach us?" They then proceeded at once to excommunicate him. The expression "they cast him out," must surely mean much more than merely turning him out of the room or place where they were assembled. To my mind it means nothing less than a formal expulsion from the commonwealth of Israel, and the consequent degradation of the man. It must be admitted that Maldonatus and some others think it only means that "they turned him out of the room" where they were. But this does not agree with the context, and almost all commentators think "excommunication" is meant.

It is held by many that the expression, "born in sin," was used with special reference to the healed man's old infirmity of blindness. "Thy very blindness shows thee to have been a very wicked man. It is God's stamp on thy wickedness. Body and soul are both polluted by sin." There may be a latent reference to the vulgar error referred to at verse 2, that blindness was an evidence of God's special displeasure.

The expression, "Dost thou teach us?" is precisely one of those which wicked people in possession of place, rank, dignity, and income, are fond of using about Reformers of the Church and independent thinkers.—"How can such an ignorant person as you pretend to know better than us, and teach us. We are high in office, and must know better than you!"

Let us note that this resort to personal abuse and violent language is often a sure mark of a failing cause in religion. Inability to reply to argument is often the true cause of ill-temper and personalities. Truth can afford to be patient; error cannot.

Let us note that persecution and excommunication are common weapons with the enemies of spiritual religion. When men cannot answer arguments they often try to silence and intimidate those who use them.

The dread of excommunication with a Jew was second only to the dread of death.

Calvin remarks, "It is certain that those who are not subject to Christ are deprived of the lawful power of excommunicating. Nor ought we to dread being excluded from their assemblies, since Christ, our Life and Salvation, was banished from them."

Musculus observes that this excommunication could not have been without the vote of the majority of the Council. Truth is too often with minorities.

Pelican remarks that “to be shut out from the communion of the wicked is no dishonour or loss.”

Ferus, a Romanist, says that this verse should teach the leaders of Churches not to be hasty in excommunicating people, lest they commit as great mistake as the Pharisees.

Barradius, a Portuguese Romanist, makes strong remarks here on the great sin of unjust excommunication. He quotes the text in Samuel which says that the sons of Eli made men “abhor the offering of the Lord;” and applies to the same point the text in Canticles where the bride complains that the keeper and watchmen who ought to have helped, “smote and wounded her.”

Quesnel remarks that wicked pastors are always impatient that any one should remind them of their duty.

Lightfoot observes that this man was the first confessor who suffered for Christ’s sake, as John the Baptist was the first martyr.

Trench observes that the Pharisees in their rage forgot “that the two charges,—one, that the man had not been born blind and was an impostor; the other, that he bore the mark of God’s anger in blindness reaching back to his birth,—will not agree together.”

35. —[*Jesus heard...cast him out.*] An interval of time most probably elapsed between the last verse and the present one. Where our Lord was, at Jerusalem or elsewhere, and what He was doing during the interval, we are not told. We can hardly suppose that the events related in the present and following verses, and the former part of the tenth chapter, took place on the same day that the blind man was cured. There must have been a break. Moreover the very expression before us shows that the excommunication had had time to be reported and known in Jerusalem. Making every allowance for the public notoriety of everything done by the Sanhedrim, we can hardly suppose that in a day when there was no newspaper, the treatment of the blind man would be public news and reported without some interval of time.

As God, our Lord doubtless knew all that happened to the sufferer, but He did nothing till his excommunication was publicly reported.

Burkitt observes, “O happy man! Having lost the synagogue, he finds heaven.”

Wordsworth observes, “If those who sit in Moses’ seat teach things contrary to the law of Moses, and proceed to impose their false doctrines as terms of communion, if they will not receive Him of whom Moses wrote, and threaten with excommunication those who confess Jesus to be the Christ, then no desire of unity, no love of enemies, no fear of separation from parents and spiritual superiors, no dread of spiritual censures and penalties, must deter the disciples of Christ from confessing Him. Our Lord Himself has set the seal of His divine sanction on these principles.”

[*And when He had found, etc.*] We should note in this sentence our Lord’s kindness and compassion. As soon as His people suffer for His name’s sake He is ready to visit them and speak words of comfort and give special consolation. We see too an example of His zeal to turn temporal trials to spiritual gain. Like Him, we should be ready to say to sufferers, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God? The world fails thee. Turn to Christ, and seek rest.”

Chrysostom remarks, “They who for the sake of the truth and confession of Christ suffer anything and are insulted, these are especially honoured. So it was here with the blind man. The Jews cast him out of the temple, and the Lord of the temple found him. He was dishonoured by those who dishonoured Christ, and was honoured by the Lord of angels.”

We should note that this is one of the very few occasions on which our Lord called Himself directly “the Son of God.” (See John iii. 18; v. 25; x. 36; xi. 4.)

The word "thou" here is emphatic. "Others are unbelieving. Dost thou believe?"

36.—[*He answered and said, etc.*] This is the language of a mind ignorant of many things, yet willing to be instructed. It is like Saul crying, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and the jailer saying, "What must I do?" When a man begins to inquire about Christ, and ask who He is, it is always a hopeful symptom of his state of soul.

It may be doubted whether "Lord" here would not have been better rendered "Sir."

Chrysostom says, "The expression is that of a longing, inquiring soul."

37.—[*And Jesus said, etc.*] We should carefully notice the extraordinary fulness of the revelation which our Lord here made of Himself. In no case but this, and that of the Samaritan woman, do we find Him so unreservedly declaring His own Divinity and Messiahship. So true is it that "the meek He will guide in judgment," and that things "hid to the wise and prudent are revealed to babes." The poor and despised and friendless among mankind are often those whom He favours with special revelations of His kindness and mercy. (John iv. 26. Matt. v. 10-12.)

38.—[*And he said, Lord, I believe.*] This immediate profession of faith seems to indicate that the man's mind had been prepared by the Holy Ghost during the interval of time since His cure. The more he thought over his miraculous healing, and the Person who had wrought it, the more ready he was to believe in Him as the Messiah.

We must not perhaps estimate too highly the extent of this man's faith. At any rate it had the germ and nucleus of all justifying faith about it,—a belief in our Lord as the Messiah.

[*And he worshipped Him.*] This seems to have been something more than an action of respect and reverence to a man. It looks like the worship given to One who was felt to be very God. Our Lord accepts it, and says not one word to check it. We cannot suppose that Paul or Peter or John would have allowed a fellowman to give them "worship." (See Acts x. 25, 26, and xiv. 14, 15; Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 9.)

Chrysostom remarks how few of those whom our Lord miraculously healed, worshipped Him as this man did.

Cocceius remarks that when we consider that this act of worship follows immediately on a full profession of faith in Jesus as the "Son of God," it cannot be lightly passed over as a mere mark of respect.

Ferus observes that there is a thing said of this worshipper which is said of no one else who "worshipped "Christ. He said, "I believe," before he did it, and I believe in the "Son of God."

Poole observes that "although the word 'worshipped' in the Greek be a word used sometimes to signify that civil respect which men show to their superiors, yet it cannot be so interpreted in this place, considering what went before."

39.—[*And Jesus said, For judgment, etc.*] We must not suppose that there is any contradiction between these words and those in John iii. 17, and xii. 47. It was quite true that our Lord had not come into the world to be a Judge, but a Saviour. Yet He had come to produce a judgment, or distinction, or division between class and class of characters, and to be the cause of light breaking in on some minds which before His coming could not see, and of blindness covering other minds which before His coming flattered themselves that they were full of light. In that the expression is very parallel to that of Simeon (Luke ii. 35), "The thoughts of many hearts were revealed by His coming." Humble-minded ignorant people had light revealed to them. Proud self-righteous people were given over to judicial blindness. (See Matt. xi. 25.)

And is not this judgment a common consequence of Christ's Gospel coming to a place or a people for the first time? Minds previously quite dead receive sight. Minds previously self-satisfied and proud of their own light are given over to utter darkness and left behind. Those who once saw not, see. Those who fancied themselves clear-sighted are found blind. The same fire which melts wax hardens the clay.

Let it be noted that the Greek word rendered "might be made" would be more literally translated "might become." I do not mean to say that in no case does God ever give over people to blindness, by a kind of judgment, on account of their hardness and impenitence. But we should carefully observe how rarely Scripture speaks of it as God's act. Thus here it is not literally true that He "*makes*" them blind, but that they "*became*" blind.

Augustine remarks, "Who are those that see? Those who think they see, who believe they see." He also says, "The judgment which Christ hath brought into the world is not that wherewith He shall judge the quick and the dead in the end of the world. It is a work of discrimination rather, by which He discerneth the cause of them which believe from that of the proud who think they see, and therefore are worse blinded."

Zwingle remarks, "Judgment is here taken for discrimination, or separation into classes." Ferus says much the same.

Chemnitius thinks that our Lord spoke these words with special reference to the false and unjust judgment of excommunication, which the Pharisees had just passed. It is as though He would say, "True judgment, a right discrimination into classes, is my prerogative. The excommunication of a Pharisee is worthless."

Musculus and Gualter think that "judgment" here means the eternal decree of God. "I came into the world to carry out God's eternal purposes, which are that the wise and prudent should remain in darkness, truth should be revealed to babes." But this seems far-fetched.

Poole says, "The best notion of 'judgment' here is their's who interpret it of the spiritual government of the world, committed to Christ, and managed by Him with perfect rectitude and equity. One eminent part of this was His publishing the Gospels, the law of faith. The result of which is, that many spiritually blind, and wholly unable to see the way to eternal life, might be enlightened with saving knowledge, and that many who think they see should by their obstinate infidelity become more blind than they were from their birth. Not that I cast any such evil influence on them, but this happeneth through their own sore eyes."

Whitby remarks that the Greek conjunction here rendered "that" is not causal, but only consequential; as when Christ said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," meaning, the consequence and result of my coming will be to send a sword, and not the object of my coming. He also thinks that the verse has a wide application to the Gentiles sitting in darkness being enlightened by Christ's coming, while the Jews were blinded.

Hengstenberg says, "Those that see are the Jews, in contradistinction to the Gentiles."

Burton remarks, "Judgment is not used here in an active sense. It is the condemnation implied by severing men into good and bad, which was one consequence (not the purpose) of Christ's coming into the world.—When Christ came into the world, men promptly showed themselves to belong to the state of darkness or of light, and by their arranging themselves in two great classes, anticipated their own final sentence."—"The blind (that is, simple and ignorant, yet meek and faithful men) saw; while the seeing (that is, vain pretenders to discernment, proud presumptuous persons) were made blind."

40.—[*And some.. Pharisees...heard words.*] This sentence literally rendered would be, "Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard." It seems to show that here, as on all other occasions, some of the party of the Pharisees were in the crowd which hung round our Lord,

narrowly watching all He said and did, and eagerly catching at anything which might give them an advantage against Him. It ought to make us feel the immense difficulty of our Lord's position. He was always attended by enemies, and spoke and acted under the eyes of people desiring to do Him harm. It also teaches us that we must not cease from efforts to do good, because many of our hearers are unbelieving.

[*And said...Are we blind also?*] This question cannot possibly be taken as a humble, anxious inquiry. It is rather the sarcastic, sneering inquiry of men whose consciences were pricked by our Lord's words, and who felt that He was condemning them: "And in what class do you place us? Are we among those whom you call blind? Do you mean to say that we, who are Doctors of the Law, see and understand nothing?"—St. Paul's words to the unbelieving Jew should be remembered here: "Thou art confident that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness." (Rom. ii. 17.) Blindness was probably the last thing which the Pharisees would allow could be predicated of them.

Augustine remarks, "There are many, who according to common usage, are called good people, good men, good women, harmless, honouring their parents, not committing adultery, doing no murder, not stealing, not bearing false witness, and in a sort observing the other duties commanded in the law, and yet are not Christians. And these commonly give themselves airs like the Pharisees here, saying, 'Are we blind also?'"

Ferus observes, "This is just the ancient arrogance of the Jews."

Jones of Nayland makes the pious remark, "Give us, O Lord, the sight of this man who had been blind from birth, and deliver us from the blindness of his judges, who had been learning all their lives, and yet knew nothing. And if the world should cast us out, let us be found of Thee, whom the world crucified."

41.—[*Jesus said unto them, etc.*] Our Lord's answer to the Pharisees is a very remarkable and elliptical one. It may be thus paraphrased: "Well would it be for you, if you were really blind and ignorant. If you were really ignorant, you would be far less blameworthy than you are now. If you were really blind, you would not be guilty of the sin of wilful unbelief, as you are now. But unhappily, you say that you know the truth, and see the light, and are not ignorant, even while you are rejecting Me. This self-satisfied state of mind is the very thing which is ruining you. It makes your sin abide heavily on you."

It is needless to say that our Lord did not mean that ignorance makes a man entirely free from guilt. He only meant that a really ignorant man is much less guilty than one who has light and knowledge, but does not improve and use them. No man's case is so hopeless as that of the self-confident man, who says that he knows everything, and wants no light. Such a man's sin abides on him, and, unless repented of, will sink him into the pit.

Let us note what a heavy condemnation this text contains for those professing Christians who are constantly comforting themselves by saying, "We know," "We are not ignorant," "We see the truth," while yet they lazily sit still in irreligion, and make no attempt to obey. Such persons, however little they think it, are far more guilty before God than the poor heathen who never hear truth at all. The more light a man has, the more sin, if he does not believe.

To infer the salvation of all the unconverted heathen from this text would be unwarrantable, and going much too far. The worst heathen man has sufficient light to judge and condemn him at last, and far more than he lives up to. But it is not too much to say that an ignorant heathen is in a far more hopeful condition than a proud, self-satisfied, self-righteous, unconverted Christian.

Brentius thinks that the expression, "if ye were blind," means "if ye would confess your blindness," and that "to say we see," is equivalent to a "refusal to acknowledge ignorance

and need.”

Chemnitius observes that the expression of this verse teaches that there are two sorts of sinners in this world,—those who sin from ignorance and infirmity, and those who sin against light and knowledge, and that they must be regarded and dealt with accordingly.

Musculus remarks, that nothing seems to gall men so much as the imputation of ignorance and want of knowledge of the truth. The very men who are unmoved if charged with immoral actions, such as simony, adultery, gluttony, or misuse of ecclesiastical property, are furious if told that they are dark and blind about *doctrine*.

The expression “your sin remaineth,” is very worthy of notice. It teaches the solemn truth that the sins of impenitent and unconverted people are upon them, unforgiven, and not taken away. It condemns the modern idea that all sins are already forgiven and pardoned on account of Christ’s death, and all men justified, and that the only thing required is to believe it and know it. On the contrary our sins are upon us, and remain upon us until we believe. Ferns calls it “a terrible saying.”

Tholuck remarks on the whole chapter, “The narrative of this miracle has a special value in apologetics. How often do we hear the wish expressed, that Christ’s miracles had been put on documentary record, and had been subjected to a thorough judicial investigation. Here we have the very thing that is desired: judicial personages, and these, too, the avowed enemies of Christ, investigate a miracle in repeated hearings, and yet it holds its ground. A man blind from his birth was made to see!”—No wonder that German sceptics, like Strauss and Bauer, are driven to assert that the whole narrative is a fabrication.

In leaving this chapter, it is worth remembering that this is that one of our Lord’s miracles about which nearly all commentators have agreed that it has a spiritual signification, and is emblematic of spiritual truth. Lampe remarks, that even those writers who are ordinarily most averse to spiritualizing and accommodating, admit that the healing of this blind man is a picture of the illumination of a sinner’s soul. His healing is a lively figure of conversion.

It is curious that we hear no more of this man who was healed. It is pleasant, however, to bear in mind the thought that there were many who believed in Christ and were true disciples, whose names and lives have never come down to us. We must not suppose that there were none saved but those whose histories are recorded in the New Testament.—The last day, we may well believe, will show that this man was only a type of a large class, whose names were written in the Book of Life, though not recorded for our learning by the inspired writers.