

CHAPTER IV.

*ON OTHER PARABLES BESIDES THOSE IN THE
SCRIPTURES.*

THE most perfect specimens of this form of composition, and those by which the relative value of all other in the like kind is to be measured, must be sought in that Book which is the most perfect of all books ; yet they do not belong exclusively to it. The parable, as St. Jerome has noted, is among the favourite vehicles for conveying moral truth throughout all the East. Our Lord took possession of it, honoured it by thus making it his own, by using it as the vehicle for the highest truth of all. But there were parables before the parables which issued from his lips. It belongs to our subject to say something concerning those, which, though they did not give the pattern to, yet preceded his—concerning those also which were formed more or less immediately on the suggestion and in imitation of his, on the Jewish, that is, and the Christian.

The Jewish parables will occupy us first. Some, indeed, have denied that this method of teaching by parables was current among the Jews before our Saviour's time. They have feared, it would seem, lest it should detract from his glory to suppose that He had availed Himself of a manner of teaching in use already. Yet surely the anxiety to cut off the Lord's teaching from all living connexion with his age and country is very idle ; and the suspicion with which parallels from the uninspired Jewish writings have been regarded is altogether misplaced. It is the same anxiety which would cut off the Mosaic legislation and institutions altogether from

Egypt;¹ which cannot with honesty be done, and which there is no object in attempting. For if Christianity be indeed the world-religion, it must gather into one all dispersed rays of light; it must appropriate to itself all elements of truth which are anywhere scattered abroad; not thus adopting what is alien, but rather claiming what is its own.² Our blessed Lord so spake, as that his doctrine, in its outward garb, should commend itself to his countrymen. There were inner obstacles enough to their receiving of it; the more need therefore that outwardly it should be attractive. Thus, He appealed to proverbs in common use among them, as at John iv. 37; He quoted the traditionary speeches of their elder Rabbis, to refute, to enlarge, or to correct them. When He found the theological terms of their schools capable of bearing the burden of the new truth which He laid upon them, He willingly used them;³ and in using, did not deny their old meaning; while at the same time, making all things new, He glorified and transformed it into something infinitely higher, breathed into them the spirit of a new life. 'Thy kingdom come' formed already a part of the Jewish liturgy, yet not the less was it a new prayer on the lips of all who had realized in any measure the idea of the kingdom, and what the coming of that kingdom meant, as *He* first had enabled them to realize it. So 'Peace be unto you' was an ordinary salutation among the Jews, yet having how much deeper a significance, and one how entirely new upon his lips, who *is* our Peace, and who, first causing us to enter ourselves into the peace of God, enables us truly to wish peace, and to speak peace, to our brethren. So, too, a proselyte was in the Jewish schools entitled 'a new creature,' and his passing over to

¹ The attempt fails even when made by so able and learned a man as Witsius. It is not from grounds such as he occupies in his *Ægyptiaca* that books like Spencer's *De Legibus Hebræorum* can be answered.

² In the words of Clemens (*Strom.* i. 13): 'Truth is able to gather together her own seeds, even when they fall on alien soil.'

³ See an essay by Schoettgen (*Hor. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 883): *Christus Rabbīnorum summus*.

Judaism was 'a new birth;'¹ yet these terms expressed little more than a change in his outward relations: it remained for Christ to appropriate them to the higher mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Nor less is it certain that the illustrating of doctrines by the help of parables, or briefer comparisons, was common among the Jewish teachers;² of them it might almost be said as of Him, that without a parable they spake nothing. The very formulas with which their parables were introduced remind us of those we meet in the Gospels; for instance, the question, 'Whereunto shall I liken it?' is of continual recurrence. But what then? It was not in the newness of the forms, but in the newness of the spirit, that the transcendent glory and excellency of Christ's teaching consisted.

As some may desire to see what these Jewish parables are like, I will quote, not, as is sometimes done, the worst, but the best which I have had the fortune to meet. The following is occasioned by a question which has arisen—namely, Why the good so often die young? God, it is answered, foresees that if they lived they would fall into sin. 'To what is this like? It is like a king who, walking in his garden, saw some roses which were yet buds, breathing an ineffable sweetness. He thought, "If these shed such sweetness while yet they are buds, what will they do when they are fully blown?" After a while, the king entered the garden anew, thinking to find the roses now blown, and to delight himself with their fragrance; but arriving at the place, he found them pale and withered, and yielding no smell. He exclaimed with regret, "Had I gathered them while yet tender and young, and while they gave forth their sweetness, I might have delighted myself with them, but now I have no pleasure

¹ Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. pp. 328, 704.

² Vitranga, *De Synagogâ*, p. 678, seq. Hillel and Schammai were the most illustrious teachers by parables before the time of our Saviour; R. Meir immediately after. With this last, as the tradition goes, the power of inventing parables notably declined. This is not hard to understand. The fig-tree of the Jewish people was withered, and could put forth no fruit any more (Matt. xxi. 19).

in them." The next year the king walked in his garden, and finding rosebuds scattering fragrance, he commanded his servants, "Gather them, that I may enjoy them before they wither, as last year they did."'¹—The next is ingenious enough, though a notable specimen of Jewish self-righteousness: 'A man had three friends: being summoned to appear before the king, he was terrified, and looked for an advocate: the first, whom he had counted the best, altogether refused to go with him; another replied that he would accompany him to the door of the palace, but could not speak for him; the third, whom he had held in least esteem, appeared with him before the king, and pleaded for him so well as to procure his deliverance. So every man has three friends, when summoned by death before God, his Judge: the first, whom he prized, his money, will not go with him a step; the second, his friends and kinsmen, accompany him to the tomb, but no further, nor can they deliver him in the judgment; while the third, whom he had in least esteem, the Law and good works, appears with him before the king, and delivers him from condemnation.'²—But this is in a nobler strain; it is suggested by those words, 'In thy light shall we see light.' 'As a man travelling by night kindled his torch, which, when it was extinguished, he again lit, and again, but at length exclaimed, "How long shall I weary myself in my way? better to wait till the sun arise, and when the sun is shining I will pursue my journey,"—so the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt, but delivered by Moses and Aaron. Again, they were subdued by the Babylonians, when Chaniah, Misael, and Azariah delivered them. Again, they were subdued by the Grecians, when Mattathias and his sons helped them. At length the Romans overcame them, when they cried to God, "We are weary with the continual alternation of oppression

¹ Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 682.

² *Ibid.* vol. i. 1129. This parable, like so much else in the rabbinical books, reappears in many quarters; in the Eastern romance, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, 13; and among the traditional sayings of Mahomet (see Von Hammer, *Fundgruben d. Orients*, vol. i. p. 315). This may be found put into verse in my *Poems*, p. 283.

and deliverance; we ask no further that mortal man may shine upon us, but God, who is holy and blessed for ever.”¹—There is a fine one of the fox, which, seeing the fish in great trouble, darting hither and thither, while the stream was being drawn with nets, proposed to them to leap on dry land. This is put in a Rabbi’s mouth, who, when the Græco-Syrian kings were threatening with death all who observed the law, was counselled by his friends to abandon it. He would say, ‘We, like the fish in the stream, are indeed in danger now; but yet, while we continue in obedience to God, we are in our proper element, and in one way or another may trust to live; but if, to escape the danger, we forsake that, then we inevitably perish.’²—One of much tenderness explains why a proselyte is dearer to the Lord than even a Levite. Such proselyte is compared to a wild goat, which, brought up in a desert, joins itself freely to the flock, and which is cherished by the shepherd with especial love; since, that his flock, which from its youth he had put forth in the morning and brought back at evening, should love him, was nothing strange; but that the goat, brought up in deserts and mountains, should attach itself to him, demanded an especial return of affection.³—There are besides these a multitude of briefer ones, *similitudes* rather than *parables*. Thus there is one, urging collection of spirit in prayer, to this effect: ‘If a man brought a request to an earthly monarch, but, instead of making it, were to turn aside and talk with his neighbour, might not the king be justly displeased?’⁴—In another, the

¹ Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 691.

² *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 189.

³ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 377. This too on the resurrection is good (Cocceius, *Excerpt. Gem.* p. 232): R. Ammin replied to a Sadducee who said, ‘Shall the dust live?—I will explain the matter to you by this parable. A certain king had ordered a palace to be built by his slaves in a place which lacked both water and clay. It was done. On its falling to pieces, he bade them rebuild it in a place where there was abundance of both. They declare that they cannot. Then in anger he says to them, When you had neither water nor clay, you were able to build; and now when you have both do you find it impossible?’

⁴ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 656. The same comparison with slight variation occurs in Chrysostom, *Hom.* 1, *in Oziam*, and again with further modification, *Hom.* 51, *in Matt.*

death common to all, and the doom after death so different to each, is likened to a king's retinue entering a city at a single gate, but afterwards lodged within it very differently, according to their several dignity.¹ There is a singular one, to explain why God has not told which command should have the greatest reward for its keeping.² In another it is shown how body and soul are partners in sin, and so will justly be partners in punishment.³

These, among the Jewish parables, with two or three more, which, bearing some resemblance to Evangelical parables, will be noted in their due places, are the most memorable which I have met. The resemblance, it must be owned, even where the strongest, lies on the surface merely, and is nothing so extraordinary as is often given out. To some, indeed, the similarity has appeared so great, as to need in one way or another to be accounted for. These have supposed that our Lord adopted such parables as would in any way fit his purpose, remodelling them and improving as they passed under his hands. Others have thought that the

¹ Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 388.

² *Ibid* vol. i. p. 187.

³ Cocceius (*Excerpt. Gem.* 232): 'Upon one occasion Antoninus held with the holy Rabbi Jehudâ such a colloquy as this: The body and soul, said he, can deliver themselves from judgment. Do you ask how? Let the Body say, It was the Soul that sinned, for since it left me behold I have lain in the grave senseless and as a stone. But let the Soul say, It was the Body that sinned, for since I was loosed from its bonds behold I fly through the air even as a bird. To this the Rabbi replied, I will give you a parable. A mortal king had a most delightful garden, and when the fruits were ripe set over it two keepers, one lame, the other blind. On seeing the fruit the lame man urged the blind to take him on his shoulders, so that he might gather, and they might both eat alike. So the lame man sat on the blind man's shoulders and gathered the fruits, and they devoured them. Some time afterwards the Lord of the garden came and asked for his fruits. But the blind man pleaded that he had no eyes with which to see, and the lame man that he lacked legs to approach the trees. What did the Lord of the garden? He ordered the one to be taken on the other's shoulders, and then judged and punished both at once. In like manner will God do: the soul will be attached to the body, and He will judge soul and body alike.'

Jewish parables are of later origin than those in the Gospels, and that the Rabbis, while they searched the Christian books for the purpose of ridiculing or gainsaying them, enriched themselves with their spoils, borrowing materials which they afterwards turned to account, concealing carefully the quarter from whence these were derived.¹ Lightfoot has a collection of such sayings under the title: *Wit stolen by the Jews out of the Gospel*;² but neither here, nor in the parallels elsewhere adduced, is the resemblance so striking as to carry any conviction of the necessity, or even the probability, of a common origin. The hatred and scorn with which the Jews regarded all foreign literature, most of all the sacred books of the Christians,³ makes this last supposition extremely improbable.

The resemblance is such as could hardly have been avoided, when the same external life, and the same outward nature, were used as the common storehouse, from whence images, illustrations, and examples were derived alike by all. It may be well at once to consider one, and one of the best, among these Talmudical parables, which pretend to any similarity with our Lord's. It has been sometimes likened to that later part of the Marriage of the King's Son which has to do with the wedding garment. 'The Rabbis have delivered what follows, on Eccl. xii. 7, where it is written, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—He gave it to thee unspotted, see that thou restore it unspotted to Him again. It is like a mortal king, who distributed royal vestments to his servants. Then those that were wise folded them carefully up, and laid them by in the wardrobe; but those that were foolish went their way, and, clothed in these garments, engaged in their ordinary work. After a while, the king required his garments again: the wise returned them white as they had received them; but the foolish, soiled and stained. Then the king was well pleased with the wise, and said,

¹ So Carpzw, Storr, Lightfoot, and Pfeiffer (*Theol. Jud. atque Mohamm.* th. 40-43).

² *Eruḥin*, chap. 20.

³ Gfrörer, *Urchristenthum*, vol. i. p. 115, seq.

“Let the vestments be laid up in the wardrobe, and let these depart in peace ;” but he was angry with the foolish, and said, “Let the vestments be given to be washed, and those servants be cast into prison :”—so will the Lord do with the bodies of the righteous, as it is written, Isai. lvii. 2 ; with their souls, 1 Sam. xxv. 29 ; but with the bodies of the wicked, Isai. xlvi. 22 ; lvii. 21 ; and with their souls, 1 Sam. xxv. 29.’¹ But, with the exception of a king appearing in each, and the praise and condemnation turning on a garment, what resemblance is there here ? In fact, if we penetrate a little below the surface, there is more similarity between this parable and that of the Talents, as in each case there is the restoration of a deposit, and a dealing with the servants according to their conduct in respect of that deposit. But then, how remote a likeness ! How capricious everything here ! The distributing of garments which were not to be worn, and afterwards reclaiming them,—what resemblance has this to anything in actual life ?²—how different from the probability that a nobleman, going into a distant country, should distribute his goods to his servants, and returning, demand from them an account.³

¹ Meuschen, *N. T. ex Talm. illust.* p. 117 ; cf. pp. 111, 194, 195 ; and Wetstein, *N. T.* pp. 727, 765. Those given by Otto, a converted Jew, who afterwards relapsed into Judaism, in a book entitled *Gali Razia*, have been tampered with by him for the making of the resemblance between them and the Evangelical parables more close, else they would be remarkable indeed (Pfeiffer, *Theol. Jud.* th. 39.)

² This, with so many of the rabbinical parables, sins against almost every rule which such compositions must observe, if they would carry any conviction with them. Thus the author of the treatise, *Ad Herennium*, i. 9 : ‘The verisimilitude of the story depends on our speaking as custom, opinion and nature demand, *i.e.* if the passage of time, the ranks of the characters, the reasons of the plans, the suitableness of the places shall hold together, so that it may not be objected either that there was not time enough, or no good cause, or that the place was unfit or that the person could not have done or suffered such things.

³ Unger (*De Parab. Jes. Nat.* p. 162) observes that he has gone into this comparison of Evangelical with Jewish parables,—‘partly that we may be delivered from the fashionable flippant itching for comparing passages from the Rabbis with the teaching of Jesus, which often is of so

This much on the Jewish parables.¹ Among the Fathers of the Christian Church there are not many who have deliberately constructed parables for the setting forth of spiritual mysteries. Two or three such we meet in the *Shepherd* of Hermas. The whole of its third book is indeed parabolical, as it sets forth spiritual truth under sensuous images, only it does this chiefly in visions, that is, in parables for the eye rather than for the ear. There are, however, parables in the stricter sense of the word; this, for example,² which is an improved form of the rabbinical parable last quoted: 'Restore to the Lord the spirit entire as thou hast received it: for if thou gavest to a fuller a garment which was entire, and desiredst so to receive it again, but the fuller restored it to thee rent, wouldest thou receive it? Wouldest thou not say in anger, "I delivered to thee my garment entire, wherefore hast thou torn it and made it useless? It is now, on account of the rent which thou hast made in it, of no more service to me." If thou then grieveest for thy garment, and complainest because thou receivest it not entire again, how, thinkest thou, will the Lord deal with thee, who gave thee a perfect spirit, but which spirit thou hast marred, so that it can be of no more service to its Lord? for it became useless when it was corrupted by thee.' There are several parables, formally brought forward as such, in the writings of Ephraem Syrus, but such of these as I am acquainted with could scarcely be tamer than they are.³ Origen has what may be termed a parable, and a very little use in helping interpretation, . . . partly that we may hence more clearly recognize the superiority of the parables of Jesus.'

¹ There are no parables in the apocryphal gospels. Indeed, where a moral element is altogether wanting, as in these worthless forgeries, it was only to be expected that this, as every other form of communicating spiritual truth, should be looked for in vain.

² *Simil.* ix. 32; cf. *Simil.* v. 2. There is a very fair estimate of the merits of these in Donaldson's *History of Christian Literature*, vol. i. p. 271 sqq.

³ This is the best that I know; of which, however, I only judge in its Latin translation: 'Two men set out for a certain city, which lay some thirty furlongs off. And when they had now accomplished two or three furlongs, they came upon a place by the roadside, where were woods

striking one, by which he seeks to illustrate the peculiar character and method of St. Paul's teaching; its riches, its depths, its obscurities, its vast truths, only partially shown by him, and therefore only partially seen by us. The great characteristics of the Apostle's teaching have not often been so happily seized.¹ Eadmer, a disciple of Anselm, has

and shady trees, and streams of water, and therein much delight. As they gazed at all these, one of the two wayfarers, eagerly bending his course to the city of his desires, passed by the place as one that races; but the other first halted to gaze, and then stayed there. Later on, when he began to wish to issue beyond the shade of the trees, he feared the heat, and thus staying still longer in the spot, and at the same time delighted and absorbed with its pleasantness, was surprised by one of the wild beasts which haunt the wood, and was seized and carried off to its cave. His companion, who had not neglected his journey, neither suffered himself to be stayed by the beauty of the trees, made his way straight to the city.' See also *Parænes*, xxi. 28.

¹ This parable is very fitly introduced in his *Commentary* on the Romans, v. 12-21: 'The Apostle Paul seems to me, especially in the passages which we are now considering, to be speaking somewhat after this fashion—Let us suppose a faithful and prudent servant to be introduced by his master, who is a great king, into the royal treasure-house, and to be shown the different great habitations of which the accesses are various and misleading, so that the entrance is shown him by one path and the exit by another, while sometimes different entrances all lead to the same chamber: and let the faithful servant who is being led round have shown to him one treasury of the king's silver, and another of his gold, and others also of the precious stones, the pearls, and various ornaments, the places also of the royal purple and of the diadems: again let there be shown to him the apartments of the queen in many different mansions; and yet let each several thing be revealed to him with the doors not widely open, but only on the jar, so that while he may recognize his master's treasures and the royal wealth, he may yet have no clear and thorough knowledge of any of them. After this let our servant, who is held in such trust that his king and master has acquainted him with the greatness of his wealth, be sent to gather an army for the king, let him hold a levy, and test soldiers—inasmuch as he is faithful, in order that he may attract more into the king's service, and gather him a greater army, he will feel obliged to reveal in part what he has seen; again, because he is prudent, and knows that it is necessary to keep the king's secrets concealed, he will make use of certain hints rather than of actual statements, so that while the power of the king may be made known, the management of the ordering and decoration of his palace and house-

gathered up a basket of fragments from his sermons and his table-talk. Among these are so many of his similitudes and illustrations as to give a name to the whole collection.¹ There are not a few complete parables here, though none perhaps of that beauty which the works coming directly from his hand might lead us to expect. In the works of St. Francis of Assisi there are two parables, but of little value.² Far better are those interspersed through the Greek religious romance of the seventh or eighth century, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, ascribed to John of Damascus, and often printed with his works. They have been justly admired,³ yet more than one of them is certainly not original, being easily traced up to earlier sources. A good one will be found in the note below.⁴

hold may yet remain hid. After this fashion, then, the Apostle Paul also seems to me to do in these passages, &c.'

¹ *De S. Anselmi Similitudinibus*. It is published at the end of the Benedict. edit. of St. Anselm. I find no better than this, on the keeping of the heart with all diligence, of which I quote no more than is necessary for giving an insight into the whole (41): 'Our heart is like unto a mill which is ever grinding, and which a certain lord gave into the keeping of one of his slaves, with the instruction that he should only grind in it his master's corn, and should himself live on what he ground. But this servant has a certain enemy, who, whenever he finds the mill unguarded, immediately casts into it either sand, which scatters the flour; or pitch, which congeals it; or something which defiles; or chaff, which merely fills its place. If therefore that servant guards his mill well, and only grinds in it his master's corn, he both serves his master, and gains food for himself. Now this mill which is ever grinding something is the human heart, which is incessantly thinking something.' Cf. 42, 46.

² *Opp.* Paris, 1641, p. 83.

³ See Dunlop, *History of Fiction*, London, 1845, p. 40, seq. Wondrously beautiful parables, Rosenkranz (*Gesch. der Poesie*, vol. ii. p. 46) calls them. Cf. the *Wiener Jahrb.* 1824, pp. 26-45; and Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. iv. pp. 176-189.

⁴ 'I have heard that there was once a great city, in which the citizens made it a custom and institution to take some foreigner, of no note and utterly unacquainted with and ignorant of the laws and customs of the state, and make him their king, so that for the period of one year he had authority over all things, and freely and without any hindrance could do whatsoever he would. Afterwards, however, as he was living in complete freedom from every kind of anxiety, and was passing his days in luxury and delight without thought of fear, and deeming that the king-

Those which are entitled parables in the writings of St. Bernard,¹ and, whether they be his or no, having much of beauty and instruction in them, are rather allegories than parables, and so do not claim here to be considered.

But if parables, which are professedly such, occur rarely in the works of the early Church writers, the parabolical element is, notwithstanding, very predominant in their teaching, especially in their homilies, which are popular in the truest sense of the word. What boundless stores, for instance,

dom was his in perpetuity, they would suddenly rise against him, strip him of his royal robe, and after dragging him naked throughout the city as if in triumph, would banish him to a certain great and far distant island. Here, unsupplied with food or raiment, he was most miserably beset with hunger and nakedness, and found that the pleasure and gaiety of heart that had been granted him beyond his hope, were now changed again to a sorrow beyond all his hope or expectation. It befell, therefore, according to the ancient custom and institution of those citizens, that there was called to the throne a certain man, endowed with great keenness of wit, who, being in no wise carried away with the sudden felicity which had befallen him, far from imitating the heedlessness of predecessors in the royal dignity who had been miserably cast from it, anxiously and earnestly discussed with himself how he might best provide for his fortunes. In this busy meditation as to these matters he was informed by one of the wisest of his councillors of the custom of the citizens and the place of perpetual exile, and thus understood that without any false step he must needs make himself secure. When, therefore, he knew this, and found that the time was at hand when he would be exiled to the island and leave to others the foreign kingdom that had so strangely come to him, he opened his treasury, of which he at that time enjoyed ready and unrestricted use, and taking a vast quantity of gold, silver, and precious stones, entrusted them to certain of his most faithful slaves, and sent them betimes to the island to which he was to be carried. At the turn of the year the sedition broke out, and the citizens sent him naked into exile, as they had done the former kings. These foolish and short-reigned kings he found distressed with the most grievous famine, but he himself, who, unlike them, had sent his wealth before him, passed his life in perpetual abundance, and in the enjoyment of unbounded pleasure, and casting utterly from him the fear of those treacherous and wicked citizens, extolled himself as happy on the score of his most wise device.' This has been put into verse by Rückert in his *Brahmanische Erzählungen*, and after him by myself, *Poems*, 1875, p. 280. Compare 1 Tim. vi. 19.

¹ In the Benedictine edition, vol. i. p. 1251, seq.

of happy illustration, which might with the greatest ease be thrown into the forms of parables, are laid up in the writings of St. Augustine. One is only perplexed, amid the endless variety, what instances to select: but we may take this one as an example. He is speaking of the Son of God and the sinner as in the same world, and appearing under the same conditions of humanity: 'But,' he proceeds, 'how vast a distance there is between the prisoner in his dungeon, and the visitor that has come to see him! They are both within the walls of the dungeon: those who did not know might suppose them under equal restraint, but one is the compassionate visitor, who can use his freedom when he will, the other is fast bound there for his offences. So great is the difference between Christ, the compassionate visitor of man, and man himself, the criminal in bondage for his offences.'¹ Or, rebuking them that dare in their ignorance to find fault with the arrangements of Providence: 'If you entered the workshop of a blacksmith, you would not dare to find fault with his bellows, anvils, hammers. If you had—not the skill of the workman, but the consideration of a man, what would you say? "It is not without cause the bellows are placed here; the artificer knew, though I do not know, the reason." You would not venture to find fault with the blacksmith in his shop, and do you dare to find fault with God in the world?'² Chrysostom, too, is rich in similitudes, which need nothing to be parables, except that they should be presented for such; as, for instance, when speaking of the redemption of the creature, which shall accompany the manifestation of the sons of God, he says, 'To what is the creation like? It is like a nurse that has brought up a royal child, and when he ascends his paternal throne, she too rejoices with him, and is partaker of the benefit.'³—But the field here opening before me is too wide to enter on.⁴ It is

¹ *In Ep. 1 Joh. Tract. 2.*

² *Enarr. in Ps. cxlviii.* He has something more nearly approaching to a parable than either of these, *Enarr. in Ps. ciii. 26.*

³ *Hom. in Rom. viii. 19.*

⁴ One, however, from H. de Sto. Victore I must transcribe (*De Sacram. ii. 14, 8*): 'A certain father drives from him his stubborn

of the parables of our Lord, and of those only, that I propose to speak.¹

son, seemingly in great anger, that by this affliction the son may learn humility. But, when he persists in his stubbornness, by a secret arrangement the father sends to him his mother, who is to go, not as if sent by his father, but as of her own accord prompted by maternal affection, and by her woman's gentleness soften his obstinacy, turn his stubbornness to humility, inform him of the vehemence of his father's anger, promise her own intercession, and suggest healthful counsels . . . telling him that his father may not be appeased save by earnest prayer, but engaging herself to undertake his cause, and promising to conduct the whole matter to a good end.' The mother here he presently explains as Divine Grace.—In Poiret's *Œconomia Divina*, a parable (vol. ii. p. 554, v. 9, 26), too long to quote, is worthy of a reference; another in Salmeron the same, *Serm. in Parab. Evang.* p. 300.

¹ One Persian, however, I will quote for its deep significance (Deslongchamps, *Fables Indiennes*, p. 64). The Persian moralist is speaking of the manner in which frivolous and sensual pleasures cause men to forget all the deeper interests of their spiritual being: 'The human race may best be likened to a man, who, flying from a wild elephant, has taken refuge in a well and is hanging to two branches which cover the opening; he has rested his feet on something which juts out from the sides of the well: these are four snakes which thrust out their heads from their holes; at the bottom of the well he sees a dragon with gaping jaws only waiting for his fall to devour him. He looks to the two branches from which he hangs and he sees that two rats, one black and the other white, are gnawing them at the point where they join the trunk. He takes note, however, of yet another object: it is a hive full of honey-bees; he begins to eat of the honey, and the pleasure this gives him leads him to forget the serpents on which his feet rest, the rats which gnaw the branches from which he hangs, and the danger which menaces him at every instant of becoming the prey of the dragon who awaits the moment of his fall to devour him. His carelessness and self-deception only end with his life. The well is the world full of dangers and miseries; the four snakes are the four humours which combine to form our body, but which, when the equilibrium is disturbed, become so many deadly poisons; the two rats, the one black the other white, are day and night, which successively consume the span of our life; the dragon is the inevitable end which awaits us all; lastly, the honey is the pleasures of the senses, whose deceptive sweetness seduces us and leads us from the path along which we ought to go.' Compare Von Hammer, *Gesch. d. schön. Redek. Pers.* p. 183, and *Barlaam and Josaphat*, 12. S. de Sacy (*Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 364) has a parable: and in the *Blüthensammlung aus d. Morgenl. Myst.*, by Tholuck, there are several from the mystical poets of Persia,—for instance, a beautiful one, p. 105.