

PARABLE XVII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE x. 30-37.

WE need not ascribe to the lawyer who '*stood up*' and proposed to our Lord the question out of which this parable grew, any malicious intention; least of all that deep malignity which moved some other questioners, who were in fact laying snares for his life (John viii. 6; Matt. xxii. 16). The question itself, '*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*' was not an ensnaring one: of another who put the same we are assured that Jesus loved him (Mark x. 21); it was not, like that of the tribute-money (Matt. xxii. 17), one which it might be hoped would compromise the answerer, whatever reply He made. Neither was the spirit which dictated the question captious or mocking. This much we confidently gather from the earnestness of the Lord's reply; who was not wont to answer mere cavillers or despisers so. It is true that this scribe or lawyer (Matt. xxii. 35, compared with Mark xii. 28, shows the identity of the two) put his question to Christ, '*tempting Him.*' But exactly the same is affirmed of another lawyer (Matt. xxii. 35); who could have tempted with no ill intention, seeing that Christ bears testimony to him, '*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*' (Mark xii. 34). For indeed '*to tempt*' means properly no more than to make trial of; and whether the tempting be honourable or the contrary, is determined by the motive out of which it springs. Thus God '*tempts*' man, putting him to wholesome proof, revealing to him secrets of his own heart, to which else even he himself might have

remained a stranger to the end (Jam. i. 12); He 'tempts' man, to bring out his good and to strengthen it (Gen. xxii. 1; Heb. xi. 17); to show him his evil, that he, made aware of this, may strive against and overcome it,—to humble him, and to do him good in his latter end (Deut. viii. 3, 16). Only he who bears the Tempter's name (Matt. iv. 3), a name which he has earned too well (Gen. iii. 1-5), 'tempts' with the single purpose of irritating, calling out, and strengthening man's evil.¹ If the intention of this lawyer is not that high and holy one, as little is it this malignant and devilish. Rather we may suppose that the fame of this young Galilæan teacher has reached his ears; and he will now take his measure; and counts that he cannot do this more effectually than by proposing to Him the question of questions, '*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*'

Our Lord answers question with question: '*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*'—as much as to say, 'What need of inquiring further? Is not the answer to thy question contained in that very law of which thou professest thyself a searcher and expounder?' The lawyer shows himself not altogether unworthy of the name he bears; for in answer to this appeal he quotes rightly Deut. vi. 5, in connexion with Lev. xix. 18, as containing the quintessence of the law. That he should thus lay his finger at once on 'the great commandment,' by the Lord Himself accepted as such (Matt. xxii. 36; Mark xii. 30), showed no little spiritual discernment. His words are right words, however he may be ignorant of their

¹ Πειράζειν = πείραν λαμβάνειν. Augustine defines often the manner in which it is lawful to affirm that God tempts; thus (*Enarr. in Ps. lv. 1*): 'Every temptation is a trial, and the issue of every trial has its fruit. For whereas a man is generally but little known even to himself, he knows not what he can bear and what he cannot, and sometimes presumes that he can bear what he cannot and sometimes despairs of being able to bear what he can. Temptation comes as a kind of question, and the man is discovered of himself, for to himself he was a secret, but he was not a secret to his maker.' Cf. Tertullian, *De Orat.* 8. On the difference between πειράζειν and δοκιμάζειν see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 74.

full import, of all which they involve ; and the Lord declares as much : ‘ *Thou hast answered right : this do, and thou shalt live.*’ Let this which he knows express itself in his life, and all will be well. His conscience is touched at last ; he feels himself put on his defence, and it is, as the Evangelist declares, out of a desire to clear himself that his next question proceeds : ‘ *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour ?*’ He may not have been large and free in the exercise of love towards his fellow-men ; but then how few had claims upon him, and how difficult it was to determine which were these. ‘ *Who is my neighbour ?*’¹ The very question, like Peter’s ‘ *How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him*’ (Matt. xviii. 21) ? was not merely one capable of receiving a wrong answer, but did itself involve a wrong condition of mind, from whence alone it could have sprung. He who inquired, ‘ *Who is my neighbour ?*’ who wished the entire extent of his obligation to others to be declared to him beforehand, showed in this how little he understood of that love, whose essence is that it owns no limit except its own inability to proceed further, receives a law from itself alone, being a debt which they who are ever paying, are best contented still to owe (Rom. xiii. 8).

What he needed who could propose such a question as this, was, that his eye should be taken off from those, the more or fewer, towards whom, as he conceived, love should be shown, and turned inward upon him who should show the love ; and this which he needed the Lord in his infinite wisdom and grace provided for him in the parable which follows. Without

¹ It is instructive to see the question of the narrow-hearted lawyer, ‘ *Who is my neighbour ?*’ reappearing in one with whom we might think that he had little in common. I make this extract from Emerson’s *Essays* (*Ess.* 2) : ‘ *Do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men into good situations. Are they my poor ? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent, I give to such men as do not belong to me, and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold : for them I will go to prison, if need be ; but your miscellaneous popular charities, &c.*’

further preface He begins: '*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*' We are not expressly told that this '*certain man*' was a Jew; but doubtless we were intended to regard the traveller between Jerusalem and Jericho as such; though here and there an expositor denies this, and will see in him a heathen, much to the weakening of the lesson which the parable is meant to convey. He '*went*' or '*was going down,*' not merely because Jerusalem stood considerably higher than Jericho,—the latter lying nearly six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean sea, so that the language has its fitness in this respect,—but because the going to Jerusalem, as to the metropolis, was always regarded as a going *up* (Acts xviii. 22). The distance between the two cities was about a hundred and fifty stadia,—the road lying through a desolate and rocky region, '*the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho*' (Deut. xxxiv. 3; Josh. xvi. 1). The plain of Jericho, an oasis in the wilderness, was of rare fertility and beauty, the Tempe of Judæa, well watered, and abounding in palms ('*the city of palm-trees,*' Deut. xxxiv. 3; Judg. i. 16; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15), in roses, in balsam, in honey, and in all the choicest productions of Palestine.¹ The squalid village of Riha marks now the spot where once this glorious city stood.² On his way he '*fell among thieves,*' or rather '*among robbers*;'—but at the time when the Authorized Translation was made, there was no strongly-marked distinction between the words;³—violent and bloody men, who '*stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*'

¹ Josephus, *B. J.* iv. 8. 3. Cotovicus, *Itiner.*, quoted by Winer (*Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Jericho): 'The extensive plain in which it lies is surrounded by mountains in the form of an amphitheatre, is very pleasant and fertile, and though at present uncultivated, abounds with flowers and sweet-smelling herbs.' Compare Strabo, xvi. 2, ad finem; Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 299; and Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*, vol. iii. p. 17.

² Ritter, *Comparative Geography of Palestine*, vol. iii. pp. 18–36, brings together all of most important which modern travellers have written concerning Jericho.

³ See my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 44.

The mention of stripping first and wounding afterwards may seem to reverse the natural order in the succession of events; but is indeed exactly what would happen. The murderous banditti will not injure the raiment which shall be a part, probably an important part, of the spoil by gashes, or stain it with the blood of their victim.¹ The incident is drawn from the life. Josephus more than once mentions the extent to which Palestine in those later days was infested with banditti;² and from St. Jerome we learn that the road leading from one of these cities to the other was at one place called the Red or the Bloody Way,³ from the blood which had been there shed; that in his own time there was in this wilderness a fort with a Roman garrison, for the protection of travellers. Nor has the danger now ceased; Arabs of the wilderness,⁴ having their lurking places in the deep caves of the rocks, now as of old infest the road, making it unsafe even for the vast host of pilgrims to descend to the Jordan without the protection of a Turkish guard.⁵

As the poor traveller lay bleeding in the road, ‘*by chance there came down a certain priest that way*’;—‘*by coincidence,*’ we might say, by that wonderful falling-in of one event with another, which often seems chance to us, being indeed the mysterious weaving-in, by a higher hand, of the threads of different men’s lives into one common woof. That hand brings the negative pole of one man’s need into relation with

¹ There is a noticeable story in Lamartine’s *Travels in the Holy Land* of one who being enticed to a solitary place, and there bidden to strip to the end that, this done, his life might be taken, turned the tables on his intending murderer.

² *Antt.* xx. 6. 1; *B. J.* xi. 12. 5.

³ *Onomast.* s. v. Adommim. But it bore this name already in Joshua’s time, Josh. xv. 7 : xviii. 17. There is an impressive description of this dreary route in Lamartine, *Travels in the Holy Land*; and in Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*, vol. iii. p. 59.

⁴ Jerome (*In Jerem.* iii. 2): ‘The Arabs. . . a race much given to robberies, which to this day infests the borders of Palestine, and besets the path of those descending from Jerusalem to Jericho.’

⁵ Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 416; compare Josephus, *B. J.* iv. 8. 3.

the positive of another man's power to help, one man's emptiness into relation with another's fulness. Many of our summonses to acts of love are of this kind, and they are those, perhaps, which we are most in danger of missing, through a failing to see in them this ordering of God. At all events he who '*came down that way*' missed *his* opportunity—a priest, perhaps one of those residing at Jericho, which was a great station of the priests and other functionaries of the temple, and now on his way to Jerusalem, there to execute his office 'in the order of his course' (Luke i. 8); or who, having accomplished his turn of service, was now journeying home. But whether thus or not, he was one who had never learnt what that meant, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' who, whatever duties he might have been careful in fulfilling, had 'omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;' for '*when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite,*' but with aggravation in his cruelty; for he, '*when he was at the place, came and looked on him,*' and having seen the miserable condition of the wounded man, claiming as it did instant help—for the life that remained was fast ebbing through his open gashes—he too '*passed by on the other side.*' Tacitus, while he paints in darkest colours the unsocial character of the Jews, must yet admit this much to their honour, that, however unfriendly to all others, they were prompt to show pity among themselves;¹ but even this redeeming grace is wanting here; they on whose part it is wanting being the express guardians and interpreters of a law so careful in urging the duties of humanity, that it twice said, 'Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again' (Deut. xxii. 4; Exod. xxiii. 5). Here not a brother's ox or his ass, but a brother himself, was lying in his blood, and they hid themselves from him (Isai. lviii. 7).

No doubt they did, in some way or other, justify their neglect to their own consciences; made excuses to themselves:

¹ *Hist.* v. 5: 'Among themselves their compassion is ever ready.'

as that where one outrage had happened, there was danger of another,—that the robbers could not be far distant, and might return at any moment,—or that the sufferer was beyond all human help,—or that one found near him might himself be accused as his murderer. The priest, we may imagine, said he could not tarry; the service of the temple must not wait, must not be left incomplete during his absence. Why too should he undertake a perilous office? Was not the Levite close behind, to whom such ministries of help would more naturally appertain, and by whom his lack of service, service which the circumstances of the case rendered it impossible that he should render, would inevitably be supplied? And then the Levite in his turn may have thought with himself, that there could be no obligation on him to thrust himself on a danger from which the priest had just shrunk; duty it could not be, else that other would never have omitted it. Such action on his part would be a kind of affront to his superior, an implicit charging of him with inhumanity and hardness of heart. And so, falling back on these or similar pleas, they left their fellow-countryman to perish.

‘*But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.*’ This man was exposed to exactly the same perils as those who went before him; moreover it was no fellow-countryman who demanded his help; one rather of an alien and hostile race; but he neither took counsel of selfish fears, nor steeled his heart against all pity with the thought that the wounded and bleeding man was a Jew, whom he as a Samaritan was bound to detest; but when he saw him, ‘*he had compassion on him.*’ This, as the best thing which he gave or had to give, is mentioned first; the rest will follow.¹ While the priest and Levite, boasting themselves the ministers of the God of all pity and compassion, neglected the commonest duties of humanity, it was left to the excommuni-

¹ Gregory the Great says beautifully on this (*Moral.* xx. 36): ‘For in supplying him with things more external, he bestowed something that was outside himself. But since he granted his neighbour his tears and his compassion, he gave him also something from within himself.’

eated Samaritan, whose very name was a bye-word of scorn among the Jews, and synonymous with heretic (John viii. 48), to show what love was; and this toward one of an alien stock; ¹ one of a people who would have no dealings with his

¹ Our Lord calls the Samaritan a 'stranger' (ἀλλογενής, Luke xvii. 18), one of a different stock; ἀλλοεθνείς Josephus tells us they were wont to style themselves, when in the evil times of the Jews they wished to disclaim all relationship, and such he evidently accounts them (*Antt.* ix. 14. 3; xi. 8. 6). The notion of the Samaritans as a *mingled* people, composed of two elements, one heathen and one Jewish, has of late found its way not merely into popular but into learned books; so that they are often spoken of as, in a great measure, the later representatives of the ten tribes. The mistake is quite recent. In Christian antiquity they were always regarded as a people of unmingled heathen blood (see testimonies in Suicer, *Theas.* s. v. Σαμαρείτης, to which may be added Theophylact on Luke xvii. 15, Ἀσσύριοι γὰρ οἱ Σαμαρεῖται); so too by the expositors of two hundred years ago. Hammond describes the Samaritan in our parable as 'being of an Assyrian extraction;' and Maldonatus: Samaritani origine Chaldæi erant; see Reland, *De Samaritanis*. For the opinion of Makrizi, the very accurate and learned Arabian geographer, see S. de Sacy, *Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 177; and Robinson says (*Biblical Researches*), 'The physiognomy of those we saw was not Jewish.' At 2 Kin. xvii., where the deportation of Israel is related, there is not a word suggesting that any were left, or that there afterwards was any blending of the Cuthites and other Assyrian colonists brought in, with a remnant of the Israelites whom they found in the land. It is true that when Judah was carried away captive, many of the poorer sort were allowed to remain (2 Kin. xxv. 12); and Winer (*Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Samaritaner) thinks it very unlikely that some out of the ten tribes were not left behind in like manner. But at 2 Kin. xxi. 13 the Lord threatening Judah says, 'I will stretch over Jerusalem *the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab*; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, and turneth it upside down.' This, only a threat against Judah, in part averted by repentance, had actually been executed against Samaria (2 Kin. xvii. 6, 23, 24; Jer. vii. 15; Josephus, *Antt.* ix. 14. 1). With Oriental conquerors it was no uncommon thing thus thoroughly to clear a conquered territory of all its inhabitants; σαγηνεύειν the actual process was called (Herodotus, iii. 149; vi. 31). If the Samaritans had owned any Jewish blood, they would certainly have urged this, as mightily strengthening their claim to be allowed to take part with the returned Jewish exiles, in the rebuilding of the temple; but their words practically exclude this: 'We seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither' (Ezra iv. 2). When our Lord, at the first sending out of

people, who anathematized them; even as, no doubt, all the influences which had surrounded him from his youth would have led him, as far as he yielded to them, to repay insult with insult, and hate with hate. For if the Jew called the Samaritan a Cuthite,—a proselyte of the lions (2 Kin. xvii. 24, 25, 30),—an idolater worshipping the image of a dove,—if he cursed him publicly in his synagogue,—prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection of life, and by refusing under any conditions to admit him as a proselyte, did his best to secure the fulfilment of this prayer,—proclaimed that his testimony was naught and might not be received,—that he who entertained a Samaritan in his house was laying up judgment for his children,—that to eat a morsel of his food was as the eating of swine's flesh,—and would rather suffer any need than be beholden to him for the smallest office of charity,—if he set it as an object of desire that he might never so much as *see* a Cuthite; the Samaritan was not behind-hand in cursing, and as little in active demonstrations of enmity and ill-will. We have proofs of this in the Gospels (John iv. 9; Luke ix. 53), and from other sources more examples of their spite may be gathered. For example, the Jews of Palestine being in the habit of communicating the exact time of the Easter moon to those of the Babylonian Captivity, by fires kindled first on the Mount of Olives, and then taken up from mountain top to mountain top, a line of fiery telegraphs which reached at length along the mountain ridge of Auranitis to the banks of the Euphrates, the Samaritans would give the signal on the night preceding the right one, so to perplex and mislead.¹ And Josephus mentions

his Apostles, said, 'Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not' (Matt. x. 5), He was not, as some tell us, yielding to popular prejudice, but gave the prohibition because, till the Gospel had been first offered 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' Samaritans had no more claim to it than any other heathen. See a valuable article, 'Samaria,' in the *Dictionary of the Bible*.

¹ This, according to Makrizi (S. de Sacy, *Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 159), first put the Jews on calculating for themselves the moment of the new moon. Cf. Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 344.

that they sometimes proceeded much further than merely to refuse hospitality to the Jews who were going up to the feasts of Jerusalem ; they fell upon and murdered many of them ;¹ and once, most horrible profanation of all (see 2 Kin. xxiii. 13, 14 ; Matt. xxiii. 27 ; Luke xi. 44 ; Num. xix. 16 ; Ezek. xxxix. 15), a Samaritan entering Jerusalem secretly, polluted the whole temple by scattering in it human bones.²

But the heart of this Samaritan was not hardened ; though so many influences must have been at work to steel it against the distresses of a Jew ; though he must have known that any Jew who was faithful to the precepts of the Jewish schools would not merely have left, but have made it a point of conscience to leave, him in his blood, would have counted that he was doing a righteous act therein. All the details of his tender care toward the poor stranger, of whom he knew nothing, save that he belonged to a nation the most bitterly hostile to his own, are given with a touching minuteness. He '*bound up his wounds,*' no doubt with strips torn from his own garments, '*pouring in oil and wine,*' wine to cleanse them, and oil to assuage their smart and to bring gently their sides together (Isa. i. 6), these two being costly and highly esteemed remedies in all the East.³ No little time must have been thus consumed, and this when there was every motive for haste. Having thus ministered to the wounded man's most urgent needs, and revived in him the dying spark of life, he '*set him on his own beast*' (cf. 2 Chron. xxviii. 15), himself pacing on foot ; '*and brought him to an inn,*'⁴ we may suppose that at Bachurim. Neither did he then commit him to the care of strangers, so long as he could himself tend him ; but there, as counting nothing done, while anything remained for him to do, '*took care of him,*' tended him as

¹ *Antt.* xx. 6. 1.

² *Antt.* xviii. 2. 2 ; *B. J.* ii. 12. 3.

³ Pliny, *H. N.* xxxi. 47.

⁴ Πανδοχείον (cf. ὑποδοχείον, Strabo), not altogether identical with κατάλυμα (Luke ii. 7) ; though both are translated by the same word. This has a host, is something of an inn in our sense of the word ; that more the Eastern caravanserai, where every one shifts for himself. See the *Dict. of the Bible*, s. v. Inn.

his state required. Nor even so did he account that he had paid the whole debt of love, but with considerate foresight provided for the further wants of the sufferer: '*And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more,¹ when I come again, I² will repay thee.*' The sum sounds small, though larger than it sounds; but we may assume that he was journeying on some needful business to Jerusalem, and that a day or two would bring him back.

Beautiful as is this parable when thus taken simply in the letter, inviting us to 'put on bowels of mercies,' to shrink from no offices of love, even though they should be painful and perilous; yet how much fairer still, how much more mightily provoking to love and good works, when, with most of the Fathers, and with many of the Reformers, we trace in it a deeper meaning still, and see the work of Christ, of the merciful Son of man Himself, portrayed to us here. None can refuse to acknowledge the facility with which all the circumstances of the parable yield themselves to this interpretation. It has been indeed objected, that it leaves the parable beside the mark, and nothing to the matter immediately in hand. But this is not so. For what is that matter? To magnify the law of love, to show who fulfils it, and who not. But if Christ Himself, He who accounted Himself every man's brother, fulfilled it the best, showed how we ought to love and whom; and if his example, or rather faith in his love towards us, is alone effectual in kindling our love to one another, He might well propose Himself and his act in succouring the perishing humanity, as the everlasting pattern of self-forgetting love, and place it in strongest contrast with the

¹ The Vulgate renders *ὅ τι ἂν προσδαπανήσης*, quodcunque supererogaveris. The technical theological term, 'works of supererogation,' finds its suggestion here.

² Let us not miss the *ἐγὼ ἀποδώσω*. 'Trouble not the poor man upon that score; I will take those charges on myself;' or it might be, 'Fear not thou to be a loser: I will be thy paymaster.'

carelessness and selfish neglect of the present leaders of the theocracy.¹ Such a meaning as this, lurking behind, though one day to pierce through, the literal, and to add to the parable a yet more endearing charm, would be of course latent at the first uttering. He to whom it was then spoken, took all in the obvious meaning; nor is the parable less effectual in commending man's love to his fellow, because it further shadows forth the Son of man's crowning act of love to the whole race of mankind.²

Regarding it in this mystical sense, the traveller will be the personified human Nature, or Adam as the representative and head of our race. He has forsaken Jerusalem, the heavenly City, the city of the vision of peace, and is going down to Jericho, the profane city, the city under a curse (Josh. vi. 26; 1 Kin. xvi. 34). But no sooner has he thus left the holy City and the presence of his God, and turned his desires toward the world, than he falls into the hands of him who is at once a robber and a murderer (John viii. 44), and is by him and his evil angels stripped of the robe of his original righteousness, grievously wounded, left covered with almost mortal strokes, every sinful passion and desire a gash from which the life-blood of his soul is streaming.³ But for all this he is not absolutely dead; ⁴ for as the utmost cares of

¹ A medieval expositor of this Gospel says of it excellently well: 'Herein is shown that nearness of race or of blood is nothing in comparison to that nearness which is of love and compassion. And because these abound in Christ more than in any other, more than any other He is our neighbour and is more to be loved.'

² Compare Tholuck, *Die wahre Weihe des Zweiflers*, p. 63.

³ H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Luc.*): 'The man here typifies the human race, which in the persons of our first parents forsook the celestial state, and by their sin fell into the misery of this world of exile, being by the cozenage of the old enemy despoiled of the robe of innocence and immortality, and sorely wounded by the taints of original sin.' See Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* vii. 73; Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxv. 6; and the sermon (*Hom. 34 in Luc.*) which Jerome has translated out of Origen. For the later Gnostic perversions of the parable in this direction, see Neander, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. v. p. 1121.

⁴ H. de Sto. Victore: 'For although a man may be infected with such great wickedness that he love nought that is good, he yet cannot be

the Samaritan would have been spent in vain upon the poor traveller, had the spark of life been wholly extinct, so a restoration for man would have been impossible, had there been nothing to restore, no spark of divine life, which by a heavenly breath might be fanned into flame; no truth in him, which might be extricated from the unrighteousness in which it was detained. When the angels fell, by a free self-determining act of their own will, with no solicitation from without, their loss was not in part, but altogether. With man it is otherwise. He is 'half-dead'; he has still a conscience witnessing for God; evil has not become his good, however weak he may prove to resist it; he has the sense of something lost, and at times a longing for its recovery. His case would be desperate, were there none to restore him but himself; it is not desperate in the hands of an almighty and all-merciful Physician.

He, and He only, can restore to man what he has lost, can bind up the bleeding hurts of his soul, can say to him in his blood, Live (Ezek. xvi. 6). The Law could not do it. 'If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law' (Gal. iii. 21).¹ That was but like Elisha's staff, which might be laid on the face of the dead child, but life did not return to it the more (2 Kin. iv. 31); Elisha himself must come ere the child revive.² Or as Theophylact here expresses it: 'The law came and stood over him where he lay, but then, overcome by the greatness of his wounds, and unable to heal them, blinded by so great ignorance as to know nought that is good . . . The sword of the enemy has not wholly destroyed a man, so long as it has not been able altogether to do away in him the worth of natural good.' Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. 19): 'On the side on which he can understand and know God a man is alive, on the side on which he is wasted and overwhelmed with sins he is dead.'

¹ The selection of Gal. iii. 16-23 for the Epistle on the 13th Sunday after Trinity, this parable supplying the Gospel, shows the interpretation which the Church puts upon the parable. The Gospel and Epistle attest the same truth, that the law cannot quicken; that righteousness is not by it, but by faith in Christ Jesus.

² Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* lxx. 15.

departed.' Nor could the sacrifices do better; they could not 'make the comers thereunto perfect,' nor 'take away sins,' nor 'purge the conscience.' Priest and Levite were alike powerless to help: so that, in the eloquent words of a scholar of St. Bernard's,¹ 'Many passed us by, and there was none to save. That great patriarch Abraham passed us by, for he justified not others, but was himself justified in the faith of One to come. Moses passed us by, for he was not the giver of grace, but of the law, and of that law which leads none to perfection; for righteousness is not by the law. Aaron passed us by, the priest passed us by, and by those sacrifices which he continually offered was unable to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Patriarch and prophet and priest passed us by, helpless both in will and deed, for they themselves also lay wounded in that wounded man. Only that true Samaritan beholding was moved with compassion, as He is all compassion, and poured oil into the wounds, that is, Himself into the hearts, purifying all hearts by faith. Therefore the faith of the Church passes by all, till it attain to Him who alone would not pass *it* by'² (Rom. viii. 3).

¹ Gillebert. He completed not unworthily the exposition of the Canticles which St. Bernard had left unfinished at his death.—Compare a noble passage in Clement of Alexandria (*Quis Dives Salv.* 29): 'But who else could it be but the Saviour himself? Or who rather than He would have had compassion upon us who at the hands of the powers of darkness have been nigh done to death with the number of our wounds, with fears, lusts, passions, sorrows, guiles and pleasures? Of these wounds Jesus is the one healer, utterly excising our passions by the roots; not like the law applying empty remedies, the fruits of worthless trees, but laying his axe to the roots of the wickedness. He it is who pours upon our wounded souls wine which is the blood of the Vine of David, who applies and lavishes upon us the oil of the spirit of compassion. He it is who shows to us the bonds of health and salvation as never to be broken, even love, faith and hope. He it is who appoints angels and principalities and powers to minister to us for a great reward, since these also shall be freed from the vanity of the world by means of the revelation of the glory of the sons of God.'

² Augustine's proof that our Lord intended Himself by this Samaritan is singular (*Serm.* clxxi. 2): 'When two terms of reproach were cast at

Were it absolutely needful to attach a precise meaning to the 'oil' and the 'wine,' we might say with Chrysostom, that the former is the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the latter the blood of passion.¹ On the *binding up* of the wounds it may be observed that the Sacraments have been often called the

the Lord and it was said "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil," He might have answered "Neither am I a Samaritan nor have I a devil." He answers, however, "I have not a devil." The term He answers He refuted; the term as to which He was silent He confirmed.' Cf. *Enarr. in Ps. cxxxvi. 3.*

¹ They were sometimes interpreted differently; the oil as the 'gentle consolation,' the wine as the 'stern rebuke.' Thus St. Bernard says of the good pastor: 'Let him be as the Samaritan, watching and observing when he is to present the oil of compassion and when the wine of fervour;' and at more length, *In Cant., Serm. xlv. 3.* So too Gregory the Great (*Mor. xx. 5*): 'In rulers there should be alike a compassion righteous in its consolation and a discipline pious in its wrath; wherefore also to the wounds of that half-murdered traveller who was brought by the Samaritan to the inn, both wine and oil are applied, that the wounds may be stung by the wine and soothed by the oil: so that everyone who is appointed unto the healing of wounds, in the wine may apply the sting of severity, and in the oil the soothing influence of kindness: that by the wine what is putrid may be cleansed, and by the oil what is to be healed may be soothed.' Elsewhere he has resolved this whole history into prayer (*Exp. in Ps. li.*): 'O Lord Jesus, moved by compassion mayst Thou deign to approach me, even me who while going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, while falling, that is, from the highest to the lowest, from that which gives life to that which weakens, have come upon the angels of darkness, who have not only robbed me of the garment of spiritual grace, but also have beaten me and left me nigh unto death. By giving me confidence for the recovery of my health, mayst Thou bind up the wounds of my sins, lest despairing of being healed they rage the worse. Mayst Thou apply to me the oil of remission, and pour on me the wine of penitence. If Thou wilt but place me on thine own beast, Thou wilt raise my helplessness from the earth, my poverty from the mire. For it is Thou who hast borne our sins, Thou who hast paid for us what Thou didst not take. If Thou wilt lead me to the inn of Thy Church, Thou wilt feed me with the refection of Thy body and blood. If thou wilt have care for me, neither do I pass over Thy commandments nor meet the rage of furious beasts. For I need Thy guardianship so long as I wear this corruptible flesh. Hear me, therefore, O Samaritan, me who am robbed and wounded, weeping and groaning, calling aloud and crying with David, Have pity upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.'

ligaments for the wounds of the soul; and the hurts of the spirit are often contemplated as bound up, no less than those of the body; and God as He who binds them up.¹ The Samaritan setting the wounded man on his own beast, himself therefore pacing on foot by his side,² reminds us of Him, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,—and who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Neither is it far-fetched to regard the ‘*inn*’ as the figure of the Church, the place of spiritual refection, in which the healing of souls is ever going forward,—called therefore by some a hospital,—whither the merciful Son of man brings all whom He has rescued from the hand of Satan, and where He, the good physician, cares for them until they shall have been restored to perfect health³ (Mal. iv. 2; Hos. xiv. 4; Ps. ciii. 3; Matt. xiii. 15; Rev. xxii. 2; and typically, Num. xxi. 9).

And if, like the Samaritan, He cannot tarry,⁴ cannot always be in body present with those whose cure He has begun, if it is expedient that He should go away, yet He makes for them a provision of grace sufficient to last till the time of his return. It would be an entering into curious minutiae, one tending to bring discredit on this scheme of interpretation, to affirm decidedly of the ‘*two pence*,’ that they mean either the two Sacraments, or the two Testaments, or the Word and the Sacraments, or unreservedly to accede to any one of the ingenious explanations which have been offered for them. They do better who content themselves with saying that these include all gifts and graces, sacraments, powers of healing,

¹ Thus Ps. cxlvii. 3: ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.’ Augustine: ‘The binding up of wounds is the restraining of sins.’

² Lyser: ‘By his own discomfort He sought our comfort.’

³ Augustine brings out another side of the similitude: ‘The inn is the Church in which travellers returning to the eternal country from their pilgrimage are refreshed;’ or it is an inn (*πανδοχείον*), because (Origen, *Hom. 34 in Luc.*) ‘it receives all who wish to enter.’

⁴ Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 78): ‘This Samaritan was not free to linger long on the earth: He had to return thither, whence He had descended.’

of remission of sins, or other powers which the Lord has left with his Church, that it may keep house for Him till his return. As the Samaritan ‘took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him;’—even so He said to Peter, and in him to all the Apostles, ‘Feed my sheep,’ ‘Feed my lambs’ (John xxi. 15–17; cf. xx. 22, 23). To them, and in them to all their successors, He has committed a dispensation of the Gospel, that as stewards of the mysteries of God, they may dispense these for the health of his people. And as it was promised to the host, ‘*Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee,*’¹ so has the Lord engaged that no labour shall be in vain in Him, that what is done to the least of his brethren He will count as done to Himself, that they who ‘feed the flock of God, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind,’ ‘when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away’ (1 Pet. v. 2, 4).²

Let us reverently admire as it deserves to be admired, the divine wisdom with which, having brought this parable to an end, Christ reverses the question of the lawyer, and asks, ‘*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto*

¹ Melanchthon: “Whatsoever thou spendest more, I will repay thee,” as much as to say: Labours, perils, lack of counsel are coming upon thee, in all these I will be present with and will help thee.’

² Cyprian’s use of the parable (*Ep.* 51) forms a sort of connecting link between these two interpretations, the literal and the allegorical: the wounded man is a sinning brother, one who has fallen away in time of persecution. Cyprian, who desired to deal mildly with these lapsed, and to readmit them to Church communion, exclaims: ‘Behold where a wounded brother is lying, stricken by his adversary in the battle. On the one side the devil is trying to kill him whom he has wounded. On the other, Christ is exhorting that he whom He has redeemed should not wholly perish. To which of the two shall we bring help, on whose side are we standing? Are we favouring the devil’s efforts to kill, and like the priest and Levite in the Gospel, passing by our brother as he lies almost lifeless before us? Or, like priests of God and of Christ, are we imitating what Christ both taught and did, are we snatching the wounded man from the jaws of his enemy, that he may be cured and reserved for the judgment of God?’ Cf. Ambrose, *De Penit.* i. 6; and Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.*, *Orat.* viii. 3.

him that fell among the thieves ? The lawyer had asked, 'Who is the neighbour to whom it is my duty to show love ?' But the Lord, answering question with question, demands, 'Who is a neighbour, he who shows love, or he who shows it not ?'—for it was this which He desired to teach, that love finds its own measure in itself ; like the sun, which does not inquire upon what it shall shine, or whom it shall warm, but shines and warms by the very law of its own being, so that nothing is hidden from its light and heat. The lawyer had said, 'Designate my neighbour to me ; tell me what marks a man to be such ? Is it one faith, one blood, the obligation of mutual benefits, or what else, that I may know to whom I owe this debt ?' The Lord rebukes the question, holding up to him a man, and this man a despised Samaritan, who so far from seeking limits to his love, freely and largely exercised it towards one whose only claim upon him consisted in his needs ; who assuredly had none of the marks of a neighbour, in the lawyer's sense of the word. The parable is a reply, not to the question, for to that it is no reply,¹ but to the spirit out of which the question proceeded. 'You inquire, Who is my neighbour ? Behold a man who asked quite another question, "To whom can I be a neighbour ?" And then be yourself the judge, whether you or he have most of the mind of God ; which is most truly the doer of his will, the imitator of his perfections.'

To the Lord's question, '*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ?*' the lawyer circuitously replies, '*He that shewed mercy on him ;*'—let us hope from no grudging reluctance to give the honour directly and by name to a Samaritan ;²

¹ Maldonatus is the only commentator I know who has fairly put this difficulty, which is on the face of the parable. It is one of the many merits of this most intolerant and abusive Jesuit (Maldonatus maledicentissimus, as he used to be called), that he never evades a difficulty, but fairly states it, whether he can resolve it or not.

² So Bengel : 'It is not from any reluctance that the lawyer abstains from explicitly naming the Samaritan.'

although it certainly has something of this appearance. But let that have been as it might, 'Go,' said the Lord to him, '*and do thou likewise*' (Luke vi. 36; Col. iii. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 8). These last words will hardly allow us to agree with those who in later times have maintained that this parable and the discourse that led to it are, in fact, a lesson on justification by faith—that the Lord sent the questioner to the law, to the end that, being by that convinced of sin and of his own shortcomings, he might discover his need of a Saviour. The intention seems rather to make the lawyer aware of the mighty gulf which lay between his knowing and his doing,—how little his actual exercise of love kept pace with his intellectual acknowledgment of the debt of love due from him to his fellow-men: on which subject he may very well have had secret misgivings himself, when he asked, '*Who is my neighbour?*' It is true, indeed, that this our sense of how short our practice falls of our knowledge, must bring us to the conviction that we cannot live by the keeping of the law, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified,—so that here also we shall get at last to faith as that which alone can justify; but this is a remoter consequence, and not the immediate teaching of the parable.