

PARABLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SPIRITUALLY UNFOLDED

by Edward Craig Mitchell

Mitchell's scholarly work providing detailed spiritual interpretation of Christ's parables, defining what parables are and establishing careful interpretive principles that distinguish parables from fables and allegories before analyzing each parable's deeper meaning.

46 Chapters

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00.3. Preface.

Preface. This volume is intended to be a plain, practical application of the New Testament Parables to our daily life, from the standpoint of the New-Jerusalem Church. And it is published, because there seems to be need of such a work: and the field is unoccupied. No single work on the Parables can well be exhaustive of the subject. There are several aspects in which each parable may be viewed and interpreted: and, in each case, the author has selected that aspect which seemed best adapted to practical use. As it seems best to have the explanation of each parable complete in itself, considerable repetition is unavoidable.

Regarded from a literary standpoint, the author is indebted to the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg for the general method of interpretation, and for the principles and facts of correspondences and representatives. And in several instances, the author has also adopted suggestions of other commentators. The texts of the parables, and the citations of other texts, have been omitted, in deference to the suggestion of the Publishers, to make the bulk of the volume as small as possible. The author contemplates, in the future, a companion-volume on the Parables of the Old Testament.

E. C. M.

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01. Introduction.

Introduction.

Scripture Parables; their Nature, Use, and Interpretation.

Definition. The word “parable” is derived from the Greek word *parabole*, to throw beside, to compare. It is difficult to give a distinctive definition of a parable; for an ordinary definition either excludes some essential element of a parable, or includes other forms of figurative expression. Worcester’s Dictionary thus defines parable: “a short tale, or fable, founded on something real in nature or life, from which a moral is drawn, by comparing it with something of more immediate concern.” Archbishop Trench defines it thus: “A parable is a fictitious, but probable, narrative, taken from the affairs of ordinary life, to illustrate some higher and less known truth.” The parable differs from the fable, because, in the fable, inanimate and unreasoning things are pictured as acting as human beings. But the parable deals with possible things; and it is only fictitious in the sense of being invented for the occasion. The allegory, in the strict sense, differs from the parable, because, in the allegory, ideas and qualities are personified. The allegory is generally self-interpreting, while the parable needs explanation. In the common English translations of the Sacred Scriptures, especially of the Old Testament, the word “parable” is used in three senses: 1, as an enigma, or obscure saying; 2, as any figurative discourse; and 3, as a fictitious, but possible, narrative, invented to convey and illustrate a truth. But, when treating of parables, the list generally includes those which are, strictly speaking, distinctively parables, rather than fables, allegories, prophecies, or visions. A parable is a sensuous picture of a truth; i.e., a truth brought out so that the senses can grasp it. It is not merely a figurative statement of a truth, but a statement by correspondences, or the law of natural and spiritual counterparts.

Correspondences.

There is a well-defined analogy between all inward things, as spiritual causes, and all outward things, as the natural effects of those causes. The things of the physical world are but the outward images, embodiments and manifestations of the things of the inner world of the spirit. And so, in referring to the experiences of our inward life, we use the terms which apply to our bodily life; but we use them in a figurative or symbolic manner. We speak of seeing a truth, of a warm affection, of a clear thought, or of a sweet feeling. And, when such terms are used with exactness, and in accordance with the relation existing between our bodily life and our mental life, we speak according to correspondences, or natural and spiritual counterparts. And this is the law by which the Scriptures were written. The literal sense treats of outward things, the things of man’s natural life; while, within the literal sense, as a soul within its body, there is a consistent, coherent, continuous spiritual sense, always treating of the spiritual side of man’s nature. And the inward, spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is to be discovered by a knowledge of the law, the facts, and the application, of correspondences.

Thus, the inward, spiritual sense expresses spiritual truths, applicable to spiritual life, and the literal language in which such truths are concealed, expresses those truths by analogy; i.e., by the imagery of symbols, correspondences and representatives. Our Lord's Use Of The Parable. The fact that our Lord uses the parable, in both the Old and the New Testaments, is known to all. The next point must naturally be, why the Lord spoke in parables. And, in this matter, we are not left to conjecture, for the Lord, Himself, has answered this question, in His holy Word. In Matthew 13:13, we read, "Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they, seeing, see not: and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." The truth is like a sword: properly used, it will defend and serve us; but abused, it may injure him who handles it. And, as the greater our knowledge of truth, the greater our condemnation, when we neglect it, so it is not best for a man to, be introduced into, the clear understanding of truth, until he is in condition of mind to be able to obey the truth, if he is willing.

Thus, while the logical statement of truth would commend itself to the understanding of thinking men, the parable, on the other hand, would afford the means of carrying the truth to those who were ready for it, and of passing over those who were not prepared to hear plain truth. The Parable Arrests Attention.

It has generally been supposed that a sufficient reason for the Lord's use of parables was to be found in the striking character of the parable, and its consequent attractiveness. The form of the parable is best calculated to arrest the attention of the hearer, in the beginning, and to hold it, until the lesson is fixed in the mind, when recognized. In the parable, truth is brought before the mind with great power. Analogy serves an important use in fixing the lesson in the memory. Spiritual things are so different from the ordinary natural things of man's life in this world, that they are apt to glide away from the memory. But, when we see their relation to the every-day matters of natural experience, the imagery of the parable makes a striking impression upon our imagination. Truths are thus presented in duplicate; the spirit of the truth is provided with a body of facts and the body is provided with a spirit of principle. And each side of the truth serves to fix in the mind, not only itself, but also the other side. The parables attract attention, because they are pictures, embodying principles. In them the abstract principle is embodied in concrete form. And, again, parables attract the attention of all minds, because they are pictures formed of the familiar things which all men know. We live in this world, in an active life, amid the works and duties of the body; and our thoughts are linked to our senses, by means of their experiences. And, especially in the beginning of the opening of our spiritual minds, we can have definite ideas of spiritual things, only as they exhibit some relation to our common life. The parables attract attention, because they treat of the vices which are inherent in all fallen natures, and of the virtues which must be learned and practiced by all regenerate men. The truths which are taught in the Lord's parables can never be "outdated, like a last year's almanac;" but they are like the Lord's tender mercies, "new every morning, every evening new."

Perception Of Analogy Common To All.

Again, the perception of analogy is common to all phases of human nature. The Orientals, to whom the letter of the Scripture was originally given, were very apt in perceiving analogies. But the same kind of ability lies in all men: and it is operative in all, when not silenced by irrational dogmas, or choked by sensuous life. The form of truth used in the parable is thus applicable to all natures,

and in all dispensations. And so it was the best and most universal form for the teaching of spiritual truth to natural men, in the world in general. For styles and modes of thought, and of expression, change with the times. But the principle of analogy will always remain with men, because it finds a congenial soil in all natures. The natural senses are open in all men, but the spiritual mind is open in few. And so the most universal way of reaching men, in all climes, and all times, is to reach, first, their senses; and then the truth, by analogy, will pass in, beyond the senses, of the man who is open to spiritual life. The Parable Reaches The Will.

Again, in the parable the truth passes into the mind, and strikes the will, and compels the prepared mind to open itself to a truth which the understanding would not have received, if given in logical statement. Many a truth, coming to men in clear intellectual light, would have found the mind closed to it, through prejudice. But the striking form of the parable converts the will, and thus forces the door of the intellect, in minds that are ready for the change. As an illustration of this condition, take the case of Nathan's rebuke of David, concerning Bathsheba. The parable presented the truth to David; and he expressed his indignation against the evil doer. But he had no perception of his own identity with the sinner. But the truth having found its way into his will, the application of the truth to himself was easily made, by the word of the prophet. The Parable Serves For Judgment.

Again, if a man is not willing to repent, the form of the parable serves the purpose of judgment, in making the man define his spiritual position. For, while the parable is the best form for presenting the truth promiscuously, among all nations, yet no form of truth can, of itself, carry conviction of its truthfulness to the hearer's mind, and turn him from his evils, unless he is willing to repent. Repentance depends upon the state of the man's will towards the truth.

Thus, the parable serves to give the truth to those who will use it, and, at the same time, to hide the truth from those who would profane it, being unprepared for its lessons. Like the shell of the nut, the literal parable protects the kernel from abuse, while preserving it for use. Or it is like the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud, which lighted and pointed out -the way of the journeying Israelites, while, at the same time, they concealed the people from the pursuing Egyptians. The Parable Fixes The Image.

Again, not only did the parable present the truth to him who was ready for it, and conceal it from those who were unprepared for it, but it also fixed the image in the mind of the heedless hearer, so that he could hold the image until he should become ready for the reception of the truth contained within it. The literal parable was, again, like the husk of the seed planted in the earth, protecting the inward life, or germ, of the seed, until the conditions were ready for the seed to unfold itself, and spring up into new life. The Parable Filled By The Holy Spirit.

Jesus, as He was about to leave His disciples, assured them that the Holy Spirit would come, and teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them. And this was accomplished, partly by bringing up the images which, by means of parables, had been sown like seed in their minds, and then unfolding the inward and spiritual meaning. These parables afforded mere images, to unheeding minds; but, as the mind, itself, expanded in the light of truth and the warmth of love, then these images unfolded, and were filled with higher life, in the higher aspects of truth.

And, in fact, what is genuine spiritual teaching? It is not so much the communication of accurate information, as it is the opening and training of the hearer's mind, so that he can receive all the truth that dwells within the information. The seed is the Word. And its growth depends not merely on what is planted, but also on the condition of the soil in which it is planted. The degree of the truth seen, and the phase of the truth received, will always depend on the condition of the mind into which it is received. This is abundantly shown in the parable of "The Sower," whose seeds fell into different kinds of ground. The same fact, the same doctrine, and the same parable, which communicate nothing but natural ideas to the natural-minded man, open the spiritual truth to the spiritual man, and celestial truth to the celestial man. See, for instance, how even the disciples of the Lord, in their sensuous states of mind, were perplexed over His parables. But, "He cometh with clouds," to those who live in the obscurity of the clouds, rather than in the clear light of the sun.

Each Receives According To His Capacity. The light reveals, to each man, what the man is mentally in position to see; as, in the bright light of the physical sunshine, a witness, in one location, sees the beauty of the scene, while another, in a different position, sees nothing but the glare of the sun, which blinds him to the view. It is not enough, then, that we hear what our Lord speaks but we must also be in condition to hear in the right way. And so Jesus said, "Take heed how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he seemeth to have." "He that is of God, heareth God's words." And Jesus said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." The two-fold character of the parables of our Lord, is like that of the Lord, Himself He was, in His Humanity, presented either as a mere man, or as God, according to the openness of the minds who received Him. The doctrine of the Divine character of Jesus Christ is "the stone which the builders rejected" from man-made creeds, but which "is become the head of the corner," in the New-Jerusalem. And it must also be, not only with the parables, but also with all truth, and most of all with the greatest truth, as to the character of Jesus Christ, that He can best make it known to His own disciples, and in the measure of their discipleship. As we approach the Lord, in character, we gain clearer views of His character. And so it is with all truths; as we love them, and use them, in forming our character, we understand them more and more fully. The Parables Needed In The Lord's Work. A more external reason why Jesus spoke in parables, is to be found in the fact that it was necessary for Him to do certain works on the earth, and that, had He at once plainly indicated the whole spirit of His work, He would have brought down upon Himself the enmity and violence of the Jews, before the completion of His work, and in a way to interfere with His mission. Thus, in the providence of the Lord, all the purposes of the Divine Love co-operate.

Jesus taught in parables, and thus presented the truth in such form that every hearer could take, from His teachings, such phase of the truth as he was in condition to receive. Thus good men could be aided in the work of regeneration; men who were ready could be led to repentance and reformation; men who were not now prepared to see the spiritual side of truth could have the image fixed in the memory, for future use; men who would abuse the truth, if shown to them clearly, were protected from the grievous sin of profaning known truth; and men who were ready for the judgment could be shown in the light. And so Jesus often said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He that had open ears, could hear; but the truth could pass by, without injuring, him whose spiritual ears were closed. The Principle Of Analogy. To understand the parables, we must comprehend the principle of analogy. And this requires some openness of thought, because it

requires a consideration of both sides of our life, the spiritual and the natural, For the clear understanding of the parable, it is necessary to be able to think rationally; to perceive the logical connection between ends, causes and effects. And it will also help us, in understanding the parables of the Scriptures, if we understand the principles and facts of nature, with which they deal. For the correspondence of the spiritual with the literal sense, is not merely with the form of the statement, but also with the sense, the idea. And so, to have a well-defined picture formed in our minds by a parable, we must have an adequate knowledge of the things which are employed as the symbols of truth.

Knowledge Of Doctrine Needed.

And, as the parable is a linking of natural and spiritual phases of truth, we shall have clearer knowledge of the spiritual truth which is inculcated in the parable, as we acquire a good knowledge of the doctrines of the church, in which spiritual truth is contained. It is true, in this matter, as in other spiritual things, that more is given to him who already has much; because what he already has, is the means of acquiring more.

Experience Teaches. The best way to comprehend what the Lord meant, in His teachings, is to feel as the Lord felt, towards those whom He taught. He came, not to destroy, but to save; to bind up the broken - hearted. And as we appreciate, and enter into, His feelings and thoughts, we can also appreciate His conduct and His teaching. For these were all means to the same end, the salvation of men. If we, from a selfish standpoint, and for condemnation, look upon human nature, we shall not be able to grasp the teachings of Infinite Love. The Parables Inter-Related. The parables of our Lord stand by themselves, in a class of their own. They are not merely figurative teachings; they are Divine parables, teaching by correspondences. The parables are not merely detached ideas, but they are inter-related. They all belong to one family. See, especially, the several parables given in Matthew 13, beginning with the parable of "The Sower." These parables are all connected, illustrating the progress of regeneration. We consider the parables of our Lord, as one who walks in a picture-gallery, examining the works of art. We see them individually, and also collectively, Each teaches its own lesson; and yet, like paintings in a series, each serves to explain the rest, and all help towards the understanding of each. But, as we view the parables of our Lord, let us remember that we are walking in a picture-gallery of heaven; that if we will, a heavenly guide, the Holy Spirit, will attend us, to explain the pictures. But we must carry with us a spiritual and heavenly appreciation, or the instruction of our guide will be of little practical use to us.

Differences In Different Gospels.

There are characteristic differences between the parables in the different gospels, as there are between the gospels themselves. The four gospels are statements of truth from different standpoints; from the four quarters of the compass, in the world of spirit; from the approaches to the holy city, on its four sides. But, though thus differing- in particulars, and in various characteristics yet the gospels, and their parables, all teach the same great truths of the same infinite Divine Love.

Enacted Parables. And the Divine Love, in reaching men, employed not only the spoken parable, but also the enacted parable. See, for instance, Jeremiah, at the command of the Lord, taking an

earthen bottle, and taking with him, to the valley of the son of Hinnom, the elders of the people, and there breaking the bottle, and prophesying (Jeremiah 14:1-11.) See Jeremiah making bonds and yokes, and sending them to various Kings, with the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 27:2.) See Hananiah, breaking the yoke from Jeremiah's neck, and prophesying (Jeremiah 28:10). See Jeremiah, buying a field and going through the legal forms, and then prophesying (Jeremiah 32:6-15).

See, also, Ezekiel and Zechariah enacting parables. See, also, enacted parables in the Apocalypse; for the visions, or seeings, of the prophets, were enacted parables. And so, the whole journey of the Israelites was a grand enacted parable, illustrating the journey of regeneration. In a more universal sense, our Lord teaches us by parables, in all our daily experience amid the things of earth. For what is our life on earth, but a parable of spiritual life. Everything that we see and hear, speaks to us spiritual lessons, which we may, if we will, hear and heed.

Ancient Language Parabolic. The further we go back, in history, towards the condition of mankind represented in the allegory of the Garden of Eden, the more we find the prevalence of the parable, as a method of expressing truth. When a fuller spiritual insight lifted men above the grosser and more sensuous phases of life, the whole of outward nature was a speaking parable of the inner world of the mind.

Such men "looked through nature, up to nature's God." Nature was a mirror, in which they saw their own image. And if we find even the works of the Lord teeming with analogies, is it wonderful that we find His Word, also, written in the language of analogy?

All the things of the more literal dispensations in the church, have been but figures and images of the spiritual realities which come to us in Christianity.

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Illustration And Rebuke.

Among the parables of the Lord, it is noticeable that some seem to have been given to illustrate great truths, while others seem to have been pointed rebukes of prevalent sins. But closer scrutiny reveals the fact that both these elements are actually present in each parable. The enforcing of doctrine, and the precept for the life, go hand in hand, co-operating, like the light and the heat in the rays of the sun. For Christianity is not a creed, but a life. The creed is for the sake of the life. "All religion relates to life, and a religious life is to do good."

Doctrine is the theory of life, and conduct is the embodiment of the theory, in life. The Interpretation Of Parables.

And, now, as to the interpretation of the parables of our Lord, what is the law? May each reader have his own way of reading them? Is there no law of interpretation, which can be known and used? In all things of nature, and of man, we find law. Divine Love works by methods; and these methods are laws. And, if all things of both worlds in which men live, the spiritual and the natural world, are governed by law, by order, then all the influences which reach men, must operate according to some order, which is law. And, if the parables which were spoken and written were framed in accordance with some law, then they, can be read by law.

If there is a law, it can be revealed, and men can employ it. If we know the principle of the law, and the facts of the case, we shall be able to apply the law to the case. If, in reading the parables of our Lord, we are left to the notions of each individual reader, then there is no basis of known truth to be derived from them. But if there is a known law, then we have a sure foundation on which to build the teachings, Every science has its laws and its terms, and every art has its modes. In music, and, in fact, in all writing, there are signs for sounds. And when we learn these, they tell the same story to us all, each according to his knowledge and his skill. We are not left to individual notions and caprices. The Law Of Correspondences.

And, as we have already shown, the parables of the Scriptures are written according to the law of correspondences, or natural and spiritual counterparts. This is the great law which underlies all connection between the natural and spiritual worlds, including the relation between the things of man's body and the things of his spirit. The letter of the parable deals with the things of man's natural life, but the spiritual principle which the parable illustrates is a law of man's spiritual life. And because such a relation exists between man's body and his spirit, therefore the truth is put in the form of a parable, that it may be based upon the outward things that are common to our natural life, and, by analogy, may open its inward meaning to our spiritual mind.

Thus, in the law of correspondences, or natural and spiritual counterparts, we have a fixed principle of interpretation, open to all open minds, in all ages, in all countries, and in all conditions of progress. And this is a fixed principle, or law, of interpretation, not only to the parables, but also to all other portions of the Sacred Scriptures; and, in fact, to all the experiences and the phenomena of our human life. There is one God, one truth, and one law of interpretation. "And he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Are The Parables True In Details? And the fact that there is a fixed law of interpreting the parables of our Lord enables us to answer the questions, How much of a parable may we receive, as teaching truth? Are we to gather a general principle, or to carry out the interpretation into the details of the parables? Many theological arguments have been held over these points. But, if there be a Divine law, according to which the parables are framed, that law must be full and thorough, throughout the parable. All the details are parts of the picture; and every general thing is made up of its particulars. And, in fact, see how the Lord, Himself, in interpreting His own parables, carried out the thought in particulars. See His explanation of the parable of "The Sower," who went forth to sow seed. Jesus gives the interpretation of the particulars. And we must, in addition to this fact, remember that Jesus gave only an external interpretation, suited to His audience, and did not, even with His disciples, enter into the more elevated spiritual teachings of the parables.

Thus, the question, whether to carry the interpretation into the details of the parables, was settled by the method employed by Jesus, Himself. And the reason of this method is clear, from the principles of correspondences.

We may carry the interpretation into the details of the parable, as long as we follow the principles and the facts of correspondences.

Unwarranted Inferences. The only danger lies in departing from correspondences, and in drawing mere inferences, which are unwarranted, either by the correspondences of the parable, or by the general tenor of the teachings of the gospels. For instance, in the parable of "The Ten Virgins," if, from the fact that five were wise and five were foolish, we should infer that just half the

human race were to be saved, and half to be lost, we should make a foolish inference, utterly unwarranted by anything in the parable, or by anything else in the teachings of our Lord. And such an inference would not be an application of the law of correspondences, for a correspondence is between an external thing and its internal, that is, between some natural thing and its spiritual counterpart; as for instance, between the natural sight of the eye of the body, and the spiritual sight of the eye of the mind', the intellect. But the unwarranted inference before stated, would be a mere comparison of one external thing with another external thing, an inference following no law of man's life. While, therefore, we may carry out all the actual correspondences of the Scriptures, we must beware of drawing gratuitous and unwarranted inferences.

Correspondence A Divine Principle. The great trouble, outside of the New-Church, has been that men have not known the principle of correspondence, as a Divine principle. They have supposed a parable to be an image in the same sense as a marble statue is an image of a man, true in outward form, but without color; or as a painted portrait is an image, true in color, and in representation of the form; but both the statue and the painting being like the original only superficially, and not at all' in the inward parts, or contents. But this is not the case with the parable. The parable is not an image, as the statue, or the painting, is an image of the man, but as the outward embodiment of a passion is an image of the passion which it expresses; as the smile and the open hand are images of the love which controls them; and as the frown and the clenched fist are images of the anger from which they spring. From the parable, therefore, we are to draw not natural inferences about external things, but spiritual causes of natural effects. The Parable Grasped From Its Central Truth. In the interpretation of the parables, we shall always best reach the spiritual lesson, by grasping, first, the main and central truth, to teach which the parable was given. And then all the collateral circumstances will take their places, as parts, of the whole picture. He who considers a parable, from the knowledge of its central truth, is like a man who stands in the center of a great park, from which center radiate many paths, ending in the circumference of the circle. The center of the circle represents the central principle of the parable, and the radii represent the circumstances of the parable, all leading up to the central principle, like paths from the outside to the center of the park. As the man who stands in the center of the park, sees the plan of the whole park, and the connection between its parts, so the man who mentally stands at the center of a parable, in the knowledge of its central truth, sees the general plan of the teaching of the parable, and the relation and connection of its different parts. And yet, like the man who walks about the circumference of the park, and does not comprehend either its plan or its connections, the mind that does not grasp the central principle of the parable, but halts in some of its circumstances, is not in mental position to comprehend its teachings.

What the central truth of the parable is, in any case, we may often learn from the context; i.e., from the introductory circumstances, and from the application. By seeing what the Lord was discussing, and what He wished to apply, we can see the force of the intended teaching. And we can thus see that, in truth, as in geometry, the circumference is always drawn from the center, and not the center from the circumference. The central truth will always interpret and apply the parable. The Parables Illustrative. For the parables are not argumentative, but illustrative; they were not given to teach new doctrine, but to illustrate and confirm doctrine already given. And only as we see its central truth can we grasp the application of the parable. All the circumstances of the context also unite in urging the central truth which the parable illustrates. The truth that is in the parable will

always be clear to those who are in the light of truth. The central principle, or truth, may not always be easy to find; but it will always be easy to see, when found; as, in all the sciences, an expert may be needed to find the law, or to make the invention, but all can appreciate the result when found. The parables of the Scriptures are the Lord's work; and they must be interpreted by the Lord's revealed laws, and for His purposes.

They were given, to illustrate spiritual truth, and not to lead men to fanciful notions, in their application to prophecy, or to national or ecclesiastical history. In the history of the churches, the parables have been pressed into the service of all sects and theorists, to prove their respective creeds. And the figurative and undogmatic form of the parables, renders them especially liable to such abuse. Outside of the New Church, the general idea seems to be that the spiritual teaching of the parable is "a sense to which one mounts up, from the steps of that which is below." But such is merely a figurative natural sense, not a distinctively spiritual sense. The Spiritual Sense Apparently Disconnected From The Literal.

It has been objected that, in the New-Church, the spiritual interpretation is entirely disconnected from the letter of the parable. But this is the very point which shows that the New-Church has the correct method of interpreting the parables. For the relation between the letter and the spirit of the parable is the same as the relation between man's body and his spirit. These seem to be entirely disconnected; and yet they are in the closest possible connection. You cannot mount up to an understanding of the human spirit, from any study of the human body, as such. In fact, some of the most pronounced infidels are among the leading students of natural science. The more they study physical life, the less they believe in the existence of a spiritual life. And why? Precisely because, to the outward thought, the spirit and the body are entirely disconnected. Their connection is not by continuity, but by correspondence. The man who would clearly understand spiritual life must find the proof of that life, not by, the external and sensuous study of the physical body, but by the opening of his own spiritual mind. And when the spiritual mind is opened, the very facts of nature, which before were stumbling-blocks to the man's perception of spiritual things, become, now, to his open eyes, confirmations, illustrations and applications of spiritual life. It is not, then, against the New-Church method of interpreting the parables, to say that the spiritual meaning thus developed is entirely disconnected from the literal sense. It is not disconnected, except as the spirit and the body of a man are disconnected. It is not disconnected, to him who is able to see the existing connection. The spiritual sense of the Scripture, Eke the spirit of man, yields the secret of its existence to him who has eyes to see. Spiritual principles being known, the parable yields its secret and its application, seen in the light of truth. For truth is seen from the center to the circumference. But without clear spiritual truth, men have no fixed law of interpretation; and then they may go to the parables, "not to draw out, from the Scripture, its own meaning, but to thrust into the Scripture" their desired doctrine. Thus, men abuse the Scripture, to uphold their own dogmas. But to him who, in a child-like spirit, goes to the letter of the Scripture, ready to receive whatever the Lord desires to teach him, the whole Scripture becomes, spiritually, "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

02. Matthew

Matthew

03. The House on the Rock, and the House on the Sand.

The House on the Rock, and the House on the Sand.

(Matthew 7:24-27.) The Instability Of Unpracticed Truth.

Religion Relates To Life. This is one of the plainest of the Lord's parables. Every one can see the main features of the lesson. Only the practiced truth withstands temptation.

"These sayings," which the Lord says are His, are the revelations of His Truth, the great life-principles which He lays down for the government of our affections, thoughts, and doings. They are His, because He is the Divine Truth, personified. And yet, as He elsewhere says, "The Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me;" i.e., Divine Truth is not self-existent, but is from the Divine Good, which is the inmost of all things. Good is the Father, and Truth is the Son: yet they are one, as Good makes one with the Truth, which is its form, and by which it manifests itself; and as the heat of fire makes one with its light, being inseparably united.

Spiritual Hearing. In the inward sense, to hear is to hear in the inward man, the spirit; and that is to know and understand. To hear the Lord's sayings, is to know and understand' His truth, and to know it to be His truth, and to receive it as, His, Natural men often adopt a principle, merely as a scientific truth, without any reference to the Lord, as the Source of that truth. For instance: the worldly-wise man says, "Honesty is the best policy;" and he adopts an honest policy, because he sees that, on the whole, it gains more than a wavering and dishonest policy. The man is not governed, by religious principles, but by worldly policy; he merely uses the prudence of the serpent in choosing his policy. But the man who seeks to know what the Lord teaches and wills, and who determines to do that which is commanded, without waiting to consider worldly policy, is governed by religious principles. The parable comes to us in warning; and its force lies in its assertion that heaven is not formed in man by knowing and understanding Divine Truth, but by knowing, understanding and doing Divine Truth. For, the difference between the man building on the rock, and the man building on the sand, is that one does the Lord's sayings, and the other does them not. Both hear His sayings: both know and understand Divine Truths; but one applies them to his life, and is secure against evil, while the other keeps them as intellectual things, but not applied to his daily life; and, as a consequence, the storms of temptation beat upon the latter man, and he falls in spiritual death. The whole reason why men should hear the Lord's sayings, is that they may do them: the doing is the end, and the hearing is the means to carry out the end. A Wise Man.

He who does the sayings, or teachings, of the Lord, is likened to a wise man. The world often calls a man wise who knows much; but the Lord calls a man wise, when he makes a good use of his knowledge, by living according to it. And folly consists not in a lack of knowledge, but in making no good use of what we know; not applying our knowledge to a good life. The wise man gave proof of his wisdom, by building his house upon a rock. In the spiritual sense, the parable refers to spiritual things; to the spiritual house which our spirit is building, in our minds. The Spiritual House.

Each man's own mind is his spiritual house, that in which he shall abide. The mind consists of the will, with its affections, and the understanding, or intellect, with its thoughts. A man's spiritual life is in his mind, that is, in his will and understanding. And the kind, or quality, of his life depends upon the state of his mind.

We are all building up our minds, with certain principles; we are all building up the inward houses in which we are to live forever. Day by day, moment by moment, we are adding piece by piece to the structure, after our chosen plan. If we build our house with heavenly materials, good affections and true thoughts, our Lord will enter into it, and abide with us. And we so build, when we keep His sayings; for He says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." With the good man, the Lord, through His ministering angels, really builds the inward house, while the man does his part, by doing the Lord's teachings. And with the evil man, the evil spirits operate, and use him as their tool. But the character of the house which we are building within, depends not entirely upon the superstructure; its stability depends principally upon the kind of foundation we give it. Without a secure foundation no house is safe. The most magnificent palace at once loses its value, when its foundation is seen to be sinking. The wise man built his house upon a rock. The Rock. In the letter of the Scriptures, "a rock" is the symbol of truth. And, as the Lord, in His Divine Humanity, is the Truth, He is called the Rock. "Jehovah is my Rock, and my Fortress. . . . Who is a Rock, save our God?" The Rock, then, upon which the wise man builds his mental house, is the Lord. In a more particular sense the Rock is the Lord's Divine Truth. We receive the truth in faith. To build our house upon a rock, is to build our minds upon the Lord's truth, held in genuine faith. The two parts of man's mind are like the two parts of a house; the will is the foundation, and the understanding is the superstructure. The house is founded upon a rock, when the will firmly holds the truth of our faith; when we know and understand the truth, and set our hearts firmly upon the truth, upon the Lord, as the Truth, and upon the good life lived according to the truth. But when the understanding, only, looks to the truth, and we do not fix our heart upon it, the truth is in one part of our mind, only, the superstructure, and is not in the foundation. Then our house may appear to be well built, but it is not secure; for it is not founded upon a rock, but upon the sand. The Sand. And "sand" is the symbol of truths lying in the memory and intellect, without being loved in the will. The rock and the sand are made of the same material; they are both stone. But the rock is firm and living, and held together according to natural laws; while the sand is dead rock, the broken and scattered bones of the great rocks of past ages no longer held firmly together. The particles composing the living rock are like the living truths in our minds, conjoined, cemented, firmly held together, by the binding principle of living love. But the particles of sand, lying loosely together, and merely adjoined, not conjoined, only placed side by side, but not cemented together by any living principle, and easily scattered apart, are like the truths laid tip in our memories and intellects, which give no firm base, or foundation, upon which to build tip ail), spiritual life. The fact that there is no firm foundation except upon the rock of living faith in the truth, based in the will, appears even more clearly from the parallel passage in Luke, in which it is said, "He that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man, who, without a foundation, built a house," etc. The Church On The Rock. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ," Jesus said to him, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock will I build My Church." The word, Peter, or Petra, means a rock. And the rock upon which our Lord builds His Church, is a living faith in the truth, based in the will. And when we build our spiritual house upon a rock, that house is a Church, for our Lord abides in it, and in it we worship Him. The Church is thus planted in man, in the truths

of faith, based on love.

If we are not principled in love to our Lord, we are led by self-love. And, as “a man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from heaven,” there is no power, or security, or stability, or happiness, in relying on self. And when a man receives truths superficially, he does not allow them to show him his own evils. And, hence, he does not put away his evils, and does not practice the truth. But the parable shows us why, and how, the sand is an insecure foundation for our house. The Rains, Etc. The danger comes from the rain, the floods and the winds. And we notice that these come upon both houses; but one stands, while the other falls. The house founded upon a rock does not escape meeting the rain, floods and storms, but it escapes being destroyed by them. The rains, floods and winds, represent the temptations which beset and assault us, in our life experience. We must all meet them; but while the good stand secure under them, the evil fall. Our faith is tried in temptations. If it be true, and founded on the Lord, loved in the heart, it will stand the test, and will come out like gold from the fire, purer and better; but if it be false, merely intellectual faith, not based in the ruling-love, it will be undermined and swept away.

Temptations. By means of our natural tendencies towards evils, evil spirits are able to draw near to us, and to excite our propensities. Yet, by means of the truths taught us from the Lord's Word, the angels draw near to us, to counteract evil influences, and to lead us to heaven. If our faith is merely in our intellect, the angels will have access to our intellect, only, and they can influence us by thoughts, only; and if our hearts are given up to evils, the evil spirits, having access to our hearts, will lead us by our affections. And we know that our affections will carry us onward, even against our thoughts to the contrary; because the affections gradually control the intellect. But, if the angels can lead us by our affections, as they can when we love the things of faith, then the evil propensities of our natural minds will not gain power over us, in temptation.

Temptation comes to all; but, to the good, it does the work of purifying; while, to the evil, it brings confirmation in evil. The severe trials of temptation are well pictured by the combined attack of the rain, the floods and winds, beating upon a house.

“Rain,” as water, is the symbol of natural truth. But, when rain is violent and destructive, it denotes truth perverted, and changed into falsity. The violent rain beating upon the house represents falsity attacking the mind, false suggestions, cunning falsities, coming upon the mind, from evil spirits, exciting the hereditary natural tendencies to evil. The Floods. In temptations, these false suggestions flow into the mind, in gradually increasing volume. As in nature, long continued and heavy rains produce a flood, so, in the mind, during temptation, the wicked rain of false suggestions gradually produces a flood, an accumulation of falsities, swelling up, like an angry flood, and rushing on, in a body, to overwhelm every spiritually living thing in their path. The Winds. And the winds come, also. These destructive storms of wind, which accompany the violent rains and rising floods, represent the peculiar attitude of falsities in which they engage the thoughts. They come with a more cunning and subtle power than the rain and the flood; like the wind, they penetrate through every nook and corner, and use every weak spot to exert their influence. They come quietly, at first, but increase into tornadoes, and threaten everything before them. A Distinction.

There is a suggestive distinction which does not appear in the common English translation; the words translated beat (“the winds, flood and rain beat upon that house,”) are not the same, in the

two cases. In speaking of the house founded on a rock, the word used would be better translated fell; while, concerning the house on the sand, the word means to dash against, or beat upon. While, in temptations, the falsities dash against, or beat violently upon, the evil mind, with its false faith, destroying all good and truth in Such a mind, yet the same falsities only fall upon the good, coming with much less violence, and carrying away with them the evil propensities which invited them, and leaving the mind in the sweet peace that follows the resisted storm. The Source Of Spiritual Storms. The Lord has built His Church, in man, upon the rock of a living, loving faith, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And this is a suggestion, to us, of the source of these violent temptations; they are furious storms, rushing out from the open "gates of hell," which are open to us, so far as we have, in us, evils and evil inclinations which tend towards the hells, and which seek to enter there, as a congenial home. By means of these temptations, the evil spirits try to seduce and destroy our spiritual houses.

But, in turning these storms of temptations to service, with the good, our Lord "makes the wrath of man to praise Him," and Secures good to the good, by the permission of evil to the evil. The good are secure, in temptations, because their hearts are regenerating, and thus their inward loves are opposed to the evil hereditary inclinations of their natural minds, through which temptations come.

Mental Houses Built In The Spiritual World. As the spirit of man lives always in the spiritual world, where is this inward house-building going on? Certainly in the spiritual world. The parable says that the man who lives by the Lord's teachings, and who is a wise man, is like one who builds his house on a firm rock. But, spiritually, the wise man is not only like such a man, but he is such a man he spiritually builds his spiritual house on a spiritual rock and the fool builds his spiritual house on spiritual sand. The text is literally true of spiritual things. The good man's inward house is actually built in heaven; for heaven is not merely a place, but an inward state. And natural death is the means of bringing him into full and conscious possession of his house. But the evil fall, in temptation, because their inward minds are closed against heaven, whence, only, help can come; and because the evil, being in real sympathy with the hells, are willing that the hells should lead them. They are really building their houses in the hells, from choice. But the house founded on the rock endured the storm, and did not fall; the man whose faith was founded in his will endured, because he sought, and received, life and help from the Lord, who, alone, is able successfully to combat against evil spirits. The Fall. But the house built on the sand yielded to the storm, and fell; and "great was the fall of it;" i.e., the mind which knows and understands truth, and yet inwardly cherishes evil, falls, in temptation, and, by its voluntary abuse of its know]edge and understanding, brings upon itself "the greater condemnation." Its fall is great, entire, complete. A fall into slight falsities, from which one can again become freed, is a slight fall; but a fall under the great and overwhelming torrents of falsities from evil, is truly a great fall, a complete spiritual undermining, a watery grave to the perishing spiritual man.

Character.

Only the practiced truth builds up the character. The great business of our life is to build a house for our Lord to dwell in, in our hearts and lives. If we do not build for our Lord, we shall build a mere "den for wild beasts, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Every good affection is a sound piece of timber, for an inward house; and every true thought is a strong and durable stone. On the other side, every evil affection is a decayed timber, and every false thought is a mouldering

brick. Our Lord gives us, in the holy Word, all the plans, specifications and estimates that are necessary to do our building well. And it should be our great delight to do this work of building. But foolish men try-to build with their own plans, while good and wise men build with the Lord's plans. The wise man selects his materials with great care, and builds with care. But the careless man takes any materials that seem to come to hand. What we need are not mere sentiments, but fixed principles. There is no way of fixing a principle in the manhood, except by doing it. In the doing, the love of the good, and the thought of the truth, are fixed in our conduct.

04. Children in the Market

Children in the Market (Matthew 11:16-19.) Man's Response To The Lord's Invitation The Literal Sense In the literal sense, the words "this generation" refer to the Jews. The Lord personally appeared to the Jews, and walked among them as a man. But "though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." Especially among the Jews, "He was despised and rejected of men." At his birth, He was cradled in a manger, "because there was no room for [Him] in the inn;" and, in His manhood, though "the foxes [had] holes, and the birds of the air [had] nests, the Son of Man [had] not where to lay His head.

Although the Word was given to the Jews, and although Jesus proved His Divine power, yet, when forced to admit His power, the Jews accused Him of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Thus the Jews rejected the Lord, sought to destroy His influence, and finally crucified Him. Though He called them to repentance and reformation, yet they remained in their evils: though He called them to see, and rejoice in, the heavenly treasures He could give to those who would receive them, yet they scorned both His treasures and Himself. The Inward Meaning.

But, in the spiritual sense, the words "this generation" refer to those who are like the Jews, in quality, or character; i.e., who know the teachings of the Word of God, and see their power, and yet reject them, in heart and life.

Such minds are called a "generation," because the interiors of men are born, or generated, from certain principles; which, in this case, were evil. They are, as Jesus told the Jews, of their "father, the devil." They are, as all others are, naturally born into evils; but they will not repent and reform, that they may be born again, regenerated, from the Lord. The trouble, with them, is not in their ignorance of doctrine, but in their unwillingness to lead the life which the Word teaches. The Children. The "children" are the little ones of the spirit, the principles of the Word of God, the goods and truths of innocence and charity; the states of good and truth laid up in the interiors of man's mind, by the Lord, even from childhood. In the language of the New Church, these principles and states are called "remains:" they are things of heaven, remaining with the human mind, so that its regeneration may be possible. They are not fully grown principles of life, matured by love and thought, grown to manhood in the life; they are only little ones, children, needing our watchful care, to develop them to their maturity and usefulness within us. They are not the life principles in which we have become confirmed; but they seek to become confirmed, fixed in us, by embodiment in our outward life.

And, for this purpose, they call upon their companions, while sitting in the markets. Through them, our Lord calls upon us to become regenerated; and He continues so to call, as long as we have "ears to hear." By means of these little ones, His children, He seeks to gain a lodgment for His good and truth, within us, where they may grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength, and become men of maturity, in us, communicating to us the Holy Spirit, from the Divine Humanity of our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, the one only God.

Calling To Their Companions.

These children, these “remains,” call “to their fellows;” they do not appeal to the things of our proprium, or selfhood, which are already fixed in us; because whatever becomes a fully confirmed life principle in the mind of man, whatever becomes a grown man in the mind, continues there; and, although it may be much modified, or counterbalanced, by other principles, yet it is never removed. It is a thing which the man has lived himself into, and it is a part of him; it is one of the materials of which his house is built; and as he builds, so he lives. The children, the “remains,” the principles of the Word, in the mind, call “to their companions,” to the other children, the mind; to those principles of the natural mind and life which are now being formed, now growing, not yet fixed, or matured. They appeal to these, because these are yet young, and are in condition to be trained and formed in an orderly way. By means of these “remains,” these spiritual children, the Lord operates, within our minds, upon those natural principles, in us, which are now developing, and which, like the green and tender twig, may be bent, gently, yet firmly, out of its natural inclinations to deformity. The interior things belong to our spiritual mind, but the “companions” are the principles of our natural mind.

Markets. The children are said to be “sitting in the markets.” Markets are acknowledged places of trade and traffic, known resorts for those who buy, sell or exchange. The things of natural life correspond to the things necessary to spiritual life, the spiritual principles which feed and clothe the human mind. And the place where natural things are bought, sold and exchanged, represents the state of mind in which a man is procuring to himself the things of spiritual life.

Examples.

He gives one thing for another, as in trade. He gives up his self-trust, and procures, instead, trust in the Lord; he gives up his pride, and, by trials, buys humility; he exchanges his ill-temper for gentleness of spirit; he loosens his love from worldly treasures, and fixes it upon heavenly treasure. The Mental Market. This state of mind, in which a man is seeking and undergoing these changes, is denoted by a “market,” a place of trade and exchange. This is our rational faculty, in which everything is examined, and in which we seek what we want. In the use of his rational faculty, a man accepts and appropriates, makes his own, the good and true principles which he sees in the Lord’s Word. That the “children” were “in the markets,” then, denotes that the “remains,” the principles of the holy Word, stored up in our interiors by the Lord, seek to operate upon us in our times and states of change; in those states in which we are rationally examining a new principle, to see if we are willing to exchange what we already have for it; in our states of rational thought and reflection upon our life and its spiritual needs; in our states of seeking such spiritual things as we think we need; in our open states, when we are ready to examine and receive.

Illustrations.

It is in this sense that our Lord said, “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed;” and that He said to the rich young man, “Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Mental Sitting. And the children are “sitting in the markets.” Sitting is a more permanent position than either walking or standing. Sitting represents a state of the will, or love. The will has taken its place, come into a certain state. But standing represents a state of the intellect, or understanding, a pause in the train of thought, preparatory to moving on. Therefore, in the spiritual sense, sitting denotes a mental state more permanent. That the children were “sitting in the markets” denotes that, by means of such “remains,” or principles of the Word, stored up in the will, by the Lord, there is a perpetual opportunity for man to be regenerated, as long as such “remains” exist within him. By this means the Lord is permanently present with a man, ever ready to operate upon the man’s will, to lead the mind to regeneration.

Spiritual Calling.

Naturally, when a man goes out into the mental markets, he desires to procure such things as favor his lusts and falsities; but the “children sitting in the markets” call “to their fellows;” i.e., the good and truth of the holy Word of God, stored in his interiors, call to those principles of his natural mind which are now developing, warning them to resist their inclinations to buy evil and false things, and appealing to them to purchase such things, only, as will develop in them heavenly character. They call to us, when we are hesitating; and they say, “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live.” The spiritual mind is formed in the image of heaven. And the natural mind should be formed in the image of the spiritual mind, embodying inward principles of good and truth in corresponding natural affections, thoughts and conduct. And our Lord, operating through our spiritual mind, sends down into our natural mind, some news of what is going on in our spirit. But, if we live for the natural life, alone, we shut up ourselves in our natural mind and life, and do not heed the whispering of the spirit, which tells of a higher and lovelier life Calling And Saying. The spirit’s children are represented as “calling,” and as it saying.” “Calling” with the tones of the voice, denotes an appeal to the will and its affections; and “saying” indicates an appeal to the intellect and its thoughts. Thus, “calling and saying,” denote exerting a combined influence upon both the heart and intellect.

Piping.

“We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.”

Musical instruments are of two classes, stringed and wind instruments. The sounds of stringed instruments are separate and individual, one string sounding at a time. Thus they are like our thoughts, separate and distinct. And so stringed instruments correspond to the things of the spiritual degree of our life, the degree of truth, with the thoughts. But the sounds of wind instruments are continuous, and as one sound, prolonged, and yet varied by the keys. Thus, these sounds are like our affections, flowing forth continuously, and yet varied in tone, by the influences bearing upon them. The pipe was a wind instrument, made of a reed. It relates, therefore, to our affectional nature, the life of our will. The music of the pipe here represents the interior harmony existing in these children, these “remains” implanted by the Lord. Such harmony results from the

celestial affection, the interior love, contained within these states of good and truth, and stored up in the interiors of the mind. These things from the holy Word sit “in the markets,” and “pipe” to their companions; i.e., these “remains,” or principles of the Word, abide with man, while his mental character is forming, developing; and they appeal to the growing natural principles in the man; as interior things, they express their interior harmony and happiness, and call upon the natural mind to seek and receive such harmony and happiness for itself. They tell of the glories of regenerate life. This is their “piping,” or making glad music with the pipe.

Dancing. And they call upon their fellows, or companions, to “dance” to this music. Dancing is a joyous motion of the body, especially of the lower limbs. It is the bodily response to joyous, buoyant feelings of the mind, aroused by music, or by good news, etc. The lower limbs correspond to the lower parts of the mind; i.e., the natural mind. Dancing, therefore, corresponds to the joy and active gladness felt in the natural mind, when the interior harmony of the spiritual mind comes down into the natural mind, by influx; when the children of the spirit. The “remains” stored up in the mind, “pipe” to their companions, the children, the developing principles, of the natural mind. The Rational Mind. And the market, where this is done, is in the rational principle of the mind; i.e., that faculty of the mind which considers, examines and compares the feelings and the thoughts, to accept what it calls good and true, and to reject what it does not approve. The rational principle, or faculty, is common ground between the spiritual and the natural minds: it is an exchange, a market, into which, from above and within, come the children of the spiritual mind, to meet the children of the natural mind, which come up there from below and without. And when the children of the natural mind heed the voices of the spirit’s children, then there is joy in both, for the spirit’s children rejoice to communicate their joy, and the children of the natural mind rejoice to receive such joy; they dance to the sound of the piping.

Historical Application. The Jews, as a people, had been given the Word of the Old Testament, and our Lord did His miracles before them, but they did not perceive the heavenly harmony of the truths of the Word, nor did they come into orderly and joyous states of the natural mind, from the influx of interior things. They professed to venerate the letter of the Word; but they interpreted it to agree with their own evils; and received little of its spirit.

Personal Application. And it is so with all who belong to the same spiritual “generation,” all who are born into, and remain in, the same evils and falsities. And, indeed, it is too much so with us all. Our natural minds are so full of worldly concerns that they are very slow to catch the inspiration of the spirit. The dear children of the spirit sit in the markets, piping to the principles of our natural minds, calling upon them to see, appreciate and respond to, the heavenly beauties of interior good and truth; asking them to receive these heavenly principles, and to apply them to life; that the grander, freer, more intense, and higher life of the spirit, may come out, and find expression and ultimatum, in the life of the body; that the grand harmonies of heaven may beautify the life on earth.

But, naturally, our eyes look downward, and our ears are dull; and, although spiritual principles are taught us, “line upon line, and precept upon precept,” we all know how slow our natural minds are to co-operate with the spirit; to push on, energetically, upon the natural plane, the beautiful things which the voices of angels ever speak to the spirit. We hear the piping, but we do not dance. The same old, rigid, cold, dry exterior covers us, offering little sympathy to each other; walking through the earth with much indifference, gratified by little else than worldly successes.

Angelic States.

But, is such the life that embodies the spirit of an angel? Is such the vessel to contain the spiritual harmonies of heaven? Where is the warm, free, fresh, generous manhood, teeming with sympathy and life, joyous and sparkling, rich in its "beauty of holiness," dancing in the gladness with which the spirit fills the receptive natural mind?

If we could, for one moment, see the soft, gentle, beautiful exteriors of an angel, well might we blush for shame that we do not cast off the hard, cold scales of the serpent from our natural minds; that we do not dance to the music of the spirit's children. In His infinite patience, Jesus stands knocking at the door of our natural mind, seeking to conjoin us to Himself, to save and bless us, filling even our natural man with the beauties of heaven. The children are piping; but we are slow to dance. We love our cold, non-receptive proprium, or self-hood, and are slow to give it up, even for a heavenly substitute.

Mourning. But the children also say, "We have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." These children, these "remains" stored in the mind, "mourn," when to man's rational perception and understanding they turn the sad side of the picture, showing him his evil and false natural states, and calling him to "lament," to repent of his evils. Through these "remains," our Lord seeks to reveal to us our natural states, that the companions, the developing principles of the natural mind, may shun and resist all evil inclinations.

Lamenting. When the natural mind hears this mourning, it should "lament;" it should come into a state of contrite humility, acknowledging its evils, and looking to the Lord, through His holy Word, for help and safety. The Jews did not so lament. John, the Baptist, preached repentance, and Jesus offered salvation; yet both were rejected, and put to death. John mourned to the Jews, but they did not lament; Jesus piped to them, but they did not dance. John represented, in one sense, the letter of the Word, which calls us to repentance, to a fast, and to a struggle out of the spiritual Egypt, and through the wilderness. But Jesus, in the same sense, represented the spirit of the Word, which comes to introduce men into the promised land of heavenly states of life, full of the riches of love and wisdom, and furnishing a feast to the soul. John came, like the literal law, to tell us, especially, what we must not do, and to call our attention to all the regulations which must be made precepts of our daily life, to bring us into spiritual order. But Jesus came to show us what we may do, if we are prepared to enter into the life which He indicates. He came to show us what heaven is, and to lead us into it. And only in so far as we undergo John's baptism of repentance, can we be ready to follow Jesus into the new life. In so far as we fast, and give up feeding our disorderly lower nature, can we cultivate an appetite for the feast, the higher life to which Jesus calls us, "that bread which came down from heaven, to give life unto the world."

Heaven Open To All. In this beautiful parable, we see the great truth that the Lord does not withhold heaven from men, but that He pours into our hearts, understanding and lives, all the love, the wisdom, and the active joy, that we are willing to live for; and that, even when we neglect our opportunities, and refuse His gracious offers, He still keeps the subject before us, in all times, and by a thousand ways; in His infinite economy, using every opportunity to warn us from our evils, and to win us to heaven. He gives free grace for all; but those, alone, can enjoy it, who are willing to live themselves into heaven, by living themselves out of evil and sin. Heaven is not in making a man's circumstances agreeable to his desires, but in leading him to make his desires conform to a

heavenly quality of life.

Wisdom.

“But wisdom is justified of her children.” The children of wisdom are those principles of life which are born of wisdom. These are justified, made just, or righteous. And these good and true principles, being outbirths of spiritual wisdom, justify, or prove the quality of, regenerate wisdom, by their fruits. We are created for heaven; we can attain heaven, if we will. There are undeveloped capacities in our minds, unexplored heights in our spirits, into which our Lord is, in many ways, seeking consciously to lead us. We know but the beginnings of what human nature may be. All the heavens are opened to us, and reaching down to greet us, and to win us to “taste, and see that God is good.” As it is natural for the little child to leap and dance with delight, when moved by a very great pleasure, so it is the way of the natural mind, to express its delight, when it finds intense satisfaction in the higher life of love which penetrates it from its inmost recesses. Have we not often heard the sweet voices of the spirit’s children, sitting in the marketplace of our rational thought, and calling us to personal repentance and reformation? Every Divine Truth that reaches us from the Sacred Scriptures, “pipes” to us of the glories of a heavenly life, while it “mourns,” to us, over our lower condition. Every such truth is a messenger of our Lord, sent to call us to the knowledge and appreciation of what is laid up for those who love the Lord, and who live with Him. No man is without these warnings, and these invitations. And if any man fails to be regenerated, it must be because he neglects both these warnings and these inducements. And, in fact, all the permitted disciplines of our life are opportunities for regeneration, when we may turn from our self-seeking, and listen to the voices of the Spirit’s children, calling us to repentance and to heaven. If we have not done the things which our Lord says, we may call “Lord, Lord,” in vain, for we shall not be known, in heaven, as children of the kingdom; but our judgment shall be by the truths of the holy Word, which we knew, and yet neglected; and these shall say, “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.”

05. The Sower.

The Sower.

(Matthew 13:3-8; Matthew 13:18-23.) Differences In Homan Receptivity.

Minds Are Like Soils. The Lord gives freely to all men, but men differ in their willingness to receive the Lord's gifts. This is the central truth of the parable. Men's minds are like soils; they are very different in their reception of the seed sown upon them. The Lord's Explanation. Our Lord has, Himself, given a general explanation of this parable; and yet, in the light of the New- Church, we can clearly see that it can be further unfolded, and its spiritual meaning developed. When our Lord was on the earth, men were in very external states of mind, and not able to bear the truth in its higher phases. But now, in the Second Coming of the Lord, men are given a rational insight into the spiritual phases of truth. The Sower And The Seed. The Sower is the Lord Himself. The seeds are the truths of the Lord's Word. Truths are sown in the mind of a man, when he hears or reads the Lord's Word, or when its teachings are communicated to him, in any way. As in the truth, so in the seed, there is vitality. Plant the seed in good ground, and behold the grand miracle of growth, wonderful in its course. And the truth, sown in the receptive mind, grows through successive stages, till it produces a mental harvest. And every truth, like a seed, contains within it, the ability to propagate new truths, to perpetuate its species; and in this, a seed is an image of the infinite quality of the Lord, always creating, never dying. The seed is the Word of the Lord. And, in a supreme sense, the Lord, Himself, is the Word, the Divine Truth, coming down to men. Thus, in the seed of truth, the Lord is giving us Himself, His own spirit and life, the vitality of the Divine Love. The Lord, as the Son of Man, the Divine Truth incarnated, "went forth to sow," when He came down to save men from impending spiritual death. He came, to sow the vital seed of His Word in the field of the human mind. In a broad sense, the Lord, as a Sower, has gone forth, in every age, in every dispensation, and to every man; and in all stages of each man's spiritual progress. The Field.

See the field, before and after the work of the sower. Before the sower came, the field performed no use, though it may have been made ready for use. The plowman may have prepared the soil. So, behold the human mind, before and after the coming of the Lord, as the spiritual Sower. How unfruitful the condition of men's minds, before the advent of the Lord. And how greatly the work of our Lord, as the Sower, changes the conditions of men.

And, as there is plowing before sowing, so John the Baptist came to the world, preparing men for the advent of the Lord, teaching repentance and baptism, for amendment of life. John was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." With the plowshare of the iron truths of the literal commandments, John sought to break tip the hard soil of the minds of the men of his time. And, on the mental ground prepared by John, Jesus sowed the seeds of spiritual truths. The letter of the Word is a John, preparing the way for the work of Jesus, who comes with the spiritual sense of the Word. The letter of the Word is the husk of the seed, containing and protecting the kernel of the spiritual sense. Both are necessary, like the body and the spirit of a

man.

Influx. To understand how good principles come to fruit, in men's minds, and how truths multiply, we must know something of the inflowing of heaven into the human mind. Every man has two departments in his mind, or two minds, the inward, or spiritual, and the outward, or natural. His rational faculty, his ability to see truth as truth, lies between his spiritual mind and his natural mind, and communicates with both of them; and thus keeps them in communication with each other, when the man is open to spiritual things. But, by birth, the man's natural mind is open; while his spiritual mind is opened by regeneration. In our inward spirit, our Lord operates for our spiritual good, and in ways unknown to us. But, In our outward mind and life we co-operate with the Lord, in keeping His commandments. As we open our hearts, and our intellects to our Lord, He comes down to meet us, from His secret abode in our inward mind. And, as we freely receive Him, and co-operate with Him, He leads us upward and inward, and opens to us the doors of our own inward mind, and gives us to dwell with Him, in the inward life of a regenerate spirit. The Rational Faculty. Our rational-faculty is the means which our Lord uses, to open to us the secret doors of our spirit.

Therefore our Lord's appeal to our rationality is not in appeal to our intellectual nature, alone; but to our hearts, through our intelligence. It is an appeal to the whole man, through his understanding.

Evil influences appeal to our self-love, with its passions and prejudices; but our Lord appeals to our rational intelligence, which guards the doorway to our inward life. And according to our reception of our Lord's truth, such will be our own spiritual condition. As we receive the Divine truth, we receive spiritual life, in the measure of the quantity and the quality of our reception. But, as we reject the Lord's truth, so we close our hearts and understandings to spiritual life, and shut out our Lord from the control of our conscious life. The parable teaches us that there are several ways in which men receive the seeds of truth, which the Lord, as the great Sower, scatters broadcast upon them. The Wayside.

"Some seed fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up." In the large, open fields, there are hard, beaten tracks crossing them, in several directions. And these paths are the "waysides." When the sower scatters his seed broadcast, some must fall upon these paths, where the soil is so hard that the seed cannot sink into it. Such seed, if not crushed by the feet of men or horses, will soon be gathered by the birds. In a good sense, a "way" is a truth, a mental way, by which the mind travels, a principle of life. "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies." "Teach me Thy ways, O Lord, that I may walk in Thy truth."

But, in a bad sense, a way is the way of the wicked, a false way, a falsity, or false principle. "Through Thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way."

Every evil mind walks in false ways, which, like hard and beaten tracks, reject the seeds of truth. The tramp of our selfish passions always wears hard pathways in our minds, confirmed by our disorderly life. On these false ways of thinking, the seeds of truth make no impression, and find no congenial soil.

Those who receive the seed of the Lord's Word as on a wayside, are those who have no affection for the truth, and hence, no concern about it. As travelers by the wayside care nothing for the seeds that they tramp upon, so the mind that does not love the truth, has no vital interest in the

truth that casually falls upon the thought. The truth takes no hold upon the mind, and does not sink into it. "When anyone heareth the Word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not," he does not take it in; he does, not understand it from the heart. The Fowls.

"And the fowls came, and devoured them up." "Fowls" represent our thoughts, flying in the mind. In this parable, birds are used in a bad sense, to mean false thoughts, which fly through the mind, and catch up, and destroy the influence of, any truth that may be in the memory.

These false thoughts spring from self-love. The falsity of self-intelligence is "the wicked one," that catcheth away the truth. Such minds are set in their false way of thinking, and are unwilling to receive any true principle of life. The truths of the Lord's Word fall upon their minds, as upon hard, beaten paths; lying in the memory, till some false thought carries them away, by perverting their meaning, or by rejecting them.

It is shown, in the doctrine of the New-Church, that "every man whose soul desires it, is capable of seeing the truths of the Word, in light." But, when the man has no real interest in the truth, his soul does not desire it. The Stony Ground.

Those who are as "stony ground," have a mere historic faith, a belief because of authority, and not because the truth is rationally seen to be true, in its own light. This "stony ground," or rocky ground, does not mean ground in which there are many small stones; for such ground, if deep and rich, may yield a good crop. The roots can find their way between the stones. But the text speaks of ground where the seed "had not much earth," that is, in which there is a thin layer of earth upon a bed of rock, affording the seeds very little room for roots. In Luke, these minds are spoken of as "they on the rock." Lying near the surface, the seeds will soon spring up, and make a show of rapid growth. But they cannot endure, for the scorching sun, and the hot wind, dry them up more rapidly than they can draw sustenance from the superficial soil. And these are persons in whom a superficial intelligence overlies the hard unreceptive character of their real nature.

Superficial Reception.

They may be rapid converts, but superficial; delighted to hear and know new truths, and loud in proclaiming these truths. They may have an emotional, gushing, demonstrative attachment to the truth, or an arguing interest in it. They see the beauty of truth, as they see a lovely flower, or a fine face. They may have some clear thought, and some external softness of heart, covering a spiritual hardness of their inward heart. Their ideas make a quick growth, but it is soon cut off because there is no profound depth of spiritual character. They have no depth of good ground. They lack inward earnestness of purpose. Nothing of truth becomes enduringly rooted in their nature.

Often such persons pass for very tender-hearted and loving natures. Their emotions are quick, though superficial. Their tears lie near the surface, and are ready to flow at the slightest notice. But their love of truth is not deep enough to impel them to shun evils, as sins against God.

Revival Converts.

Sometimes we see these characteristics in the boisterous zeal and gushing piety of "revival" converts, who are moved to ready tears at the thought of the sufferings of Jesus, while yet no depth of principle moves them to make the life of Jesus their actual example, and the principles of Jesus the of all their loves, their thoughts and their conduct. Their emotional reception of truth may

be sincere, as far as they understand their own nature; but it is not thorough. It does not reach the real motor-powers of their life. Being Offended.

“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation, or persecution, ariseth, because of the Word, by and by he is offended.” Look at the state of society, even among church-members, and see how much superficial piety is linked with false views of social life, and with infidelity towards all that is good, true and useful, all that is pure, clean and healthful, in every department of human life; and we comprehend the results of the seed of the Lord’s Word sown upon the superficial soil of rocky ground. The superficial man will not change the quality of his affections, for the sake of the truth. If the new truth begins to bring the man into trials of mind, or if it persecutes him, by seeking to cut off selfish desires, plans and pleasures, he turns against it. If the new truth seeks to enter his mind’s home, to have its place at his fireside, and to act as a counselor and a reformer in his mental household, he will soon cast it out. He can give to the truth a sentimental attachment, an emotional advocacy; but when it seeks to compel him to shun evils, as sins against God, and to do good, in the name of the Lord; to be more honorable, forgiving, forbearing, patient, loving, amiable, broad-minded, pure minded, and unsuspecting; then he becomes highly offended. The Sun Arising. The “sun” represents our love. In the evil mail the ruling-love is self-love. This sun arises, when our self-love is aroused to activity, by the opposition of the new truth. The new truth, like seed, may quickly spring up, in the external emotions of the superficial man; and he may rejoice in the truth. But, as soon as his self-love recognizes the heavenly mission of the truth, and its opposition to all selfish and evil passions, false thoughts, and selfish acts, he is aroused to intense opposition to the truth. His self-love sends out its hot rays, and scorches, and burns up, the truth that grows but superficially in his natural mind. And then “from him I hat bath not, shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have:” for, indeed, he does not really have it, at all.

Illustrations.

It was so, in the time of Jesus ministry on the earth; for some, even of His disciples, were offended at His sayings, and they “went back, and walked no more with Him.” And Jesus said, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”

Truths are sown in man’s memory, from infancy, by the Lord, from the Word, through parents, teachers and others. But when the man begins to think for himself, the passions of his self-love arise, and their lusts and falses come out; and these may adulterate, falsify and pervert, all that is good and true, in the mind.

These perish, because he has no deep soil for their roots, in his heart. Even if he believes a truth, he will give it some false application, which will favor his evils, and which will destroy the heavenly quality of the truth, in his mind.

Notice, for instance, how men pervert the idea of what constitutes a brave man, by regarding dueling as manly, when, in fact, its spirit is a brutal assertion of a self-love, which, spiritually understood, is cowardly.

See, too, how boys think it to be manly, to declare their freedom from parental restraint, when, in fact, such self-assertion is directly opposed to the whole spirit and life of an angel; and an angel is the noblest example of a finite Man. And an angel becomes more angelic, the more he loves to be

led by his heavenly Father, rather than to declare his independence those who declare their independence of the Lord are in the hells.

Tribulation. When a new truth, admitted into the thought, begins to expose the quality of our affections, thoughts and conduct, then tribulation and persecution arise, in our minds; and we are brought into temptations, in which the new truth and the old character struggle for the mastery of our minds and lives. If the truth has taken a merely superficial hold upon us, and there is not sufficient depth of goodness in which to root itself, because our real nature is as a hard, unreceptive lock, then the temptations carry off the truth, and destroy its influence.

There are persons who learn the doctrines of the New-Church and think they heartily love these doctrines. But they love to know them, not to practice them. They inwardly love themselves; and they use the clear truths of the as weapons of warfare, in argument. Then they rejoice in these doctrines, because such doctrines help them to rejoice in their own intelligence. But when these doctrines are used against their own evils, they are offended at the truth.

Testing Character.

Trials and persecutions are tests of character. Spiritually, it is, with the Christian, as it was physically, with the Israelites, the things which may abide the fire must be made to go through the fire. In the fire, the pure metal is separated from the dross. The Word "tribulation" is suggestive. The tribulum is the roller used in threshing grain. And it represents discipline by which the Lord separates the good from the evil, in men's minds, as grain is separated from the chaff.

It is by trials that we are cleansed. We never know what a principle is worth to us, until we are tried for it. In our untried conditions, very often, "half of our virtues arise from our being out of the way of temptation." But the trial compels us to define our position. If we truly and deeply love good and true principle-, we shall cling to them, as to life, and be willing to part with anything that opposes them.

But, if we love our own selfishness, more than we love good principles, then the more those principles show their opposition to our evils and falsities, the more promptly and decidedly we shall give up the good principles, to save our selfishness. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." And his inward life is the life of his loves and of his thoughts.

Good men bear trials, and, in them, lose their natural weaknesses.

"The good are better made by ill, As odors, crushed, are sweeter still." But the evil, by trials, lose even what superficial love of good and truth they previously had, but which formed no part of their inward character.

Endurance. The good man hath root in himself. The root lies below the surface, and out of sight. So, the good man's profound grasp upon spiritual principles is not a thing always seen by a casual observer. But, in the inner life of the Christian, there are depths of root, which the Lord sees and knows, though the world sees them not. According to our depth of earnestness in principle, will be our ability to stand steadfast amid the trials of daily life. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." By experience, we learn to know men, not by their mere professions, be these ever so abundant; nor by their enthusiastic emotions, however profuse; but by their enduring quality; by their ability and willingness to "stand like an anvil," while

the world hammers upon them; by their steadfast adherence to their cherished principles, amid all the storms of temptation; their strong roots striking deep into the good, rich soil of their loving hearts, and drawing an inward strength, which enables them to bear all the withering influences that come upon them. Our best and highest life comes to us only after our greatest sorrows. The courageous struggle develops our noblest strength. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Thorns.

"And some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them . . . He, also, which received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the Word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful."

"Thorns" are the lusts of evil, including the anxieties of our selfishness. When such lusts and anxieties occupy the mind, they destroy and suffocate all the Divine truths taught to the man. They make the man worldly, instead of spiritual. The life is kept in the love of self and the world, and the man is unfruitful as to good. Worldly anxieties assign to the sensuous and external life, a fictitious value. Our natural and worldly lusts, like the thorns, easily catch fire, and rapidly burn. Those who are like thorns, have, perhaps, a desire to know truths, and to be intelligent, but they do not seek knowledge to apply it to their own regeneration.

Illustrations.

Such persons may be very religiously inclined, in outward emotion, in piety, and in professions. And they may regard themselves as religious persons.

Such men, loving the world and the praise of men more than they love heaven and the praise of God, will not admit into their will, any truth that will draw them away from worldly lusts. They may be delighted with sermons, if these are supposed to be eloquent. But such minds are interested in the sensuous eloquence, not in the truth, as truth. And, in such minds, the seeds of truth fall among the thorns of worldly lusts. Where there is earth enough to grow thorns, there is enough for wheat. But the trouble is in trying to grow both the wheat and the thorns, together. If the thorns have possession of the soil, there will not be room enough for the wheat. The thorns will oppose the wheat, in two ways; they will draw out the sustenance of the soil, and they will overshadow and tangle, and choke, the wheat. The thorns have the advantage, in being native to the soil; they are at home in it. And so, in our natural minds, the lusts of the world find a congenial home, and flourish. And, spiritually, our evils and lusts of worldliness draw out the strength of our affections, as the thorns suck the sustenance from the soil. And, as the thorns choke the wheat, so the rapid growth of on:- worldly lust-, will choke the good influences of the heavens, and leave the seed of truth unfruitful.

Heaven flows into the open mind, with its warmth of love and its light of truth. But if the mind is filled with a rank growth of sensuous and worldly lusts, these will pervert the heavenly influences, and destroy their quality, in the mind. The truth that then lies in the memory, can not receive the vivifying influences of the heavens; and thus, cut off from the source of life, the seed becomes unfruitful.

Worldliness. This choking by thorns is the result of "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches;" i.e., the worldly spirit in which we engage in our occupations and pleasures. Proper care

for what we do, and what we have, is wise and useful. Cares and riches are useful to us, if properly used. Their bad influence is in the abuse, and in their deceitfulness, when abused. It is right to have worldly occupation, and to engage in it with energy, ability and industry. It is right to acquire wealth, honestly and usefully, for the sake of performing uses. But avarice is infernal.

Worldly cares may absorb too much of our attention, and of our affection. Martha was told that she was too much cumbered with serving; too much taken up with the externals of life, and neglecting the "one thing needful," spirituality. "No man can serve two masters," Therefore, spiritual things should be the masters, in the minds, and worldly cares the servants. When men give themselves up to worldly cares, the external things of the sensuous life, they are apt to depend upon their own supposed prudence, and to forget the Divine Providence. It was this self-trust, and this sensuous life, which drove men out of the condition of life symbolized by the garden of Eden. The Lord can truly bless men, only in so far as they trust in Him, and follow His teachings. We often find men who say they intend to become religious, as soon as they get their worldly affairs, in good shape. But our Lord teaches us to adopt the very opposite plan: "Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these [external] things shall be added unto you," according to your spiritual and natural needs. No man can put his worldly affairs in good spiritual order, except by regeneration.

Indifference. The condition of mind represented by the thorny ground is not one of outward opposition to the truth, as in the case of the wayside. When a man comes to attack our belief, by arguments, our interest in the truth impels us to resist the opposer's arguments. But our own self-trust is a far more dangerous enemy to our spiritual life than all the arguments of all the infidels. There is a subtle, insidious power in our own indifference to spiritual things. And this indifference grows, as we become too much interested in the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches; i.e., as the sensuous life attracts and absorbs our affection and attention. Then our mental thorns grow rapidly, and choke whatever of spiritual wheat the Lord may have sown in our minds. How weak the virtue of the mind which seeks to cultivate both the wheat and the thorns, together. "Ye cannot serve both God and Mammon."

Riches. The deceitful riches are not merely material wealth, but also all possessions, physical and mental, which we love for our own sake, and selfishly, rather than for their wise use. Knowledge, intellectual ability, personal appearance, social position, fame, official position, or anything else that we think we possess, and that make us feel that we are better than others, is a dangerous kind of riches, which may become deceitful to our souls, and destructive to our spiritual life; choking up all the seeds of good and true principles, which our Lord of Love has carefully sown in our unappreciating minds.

For, in our heart, and in our intellect, these things, when loved selfishly, occupy our affections and our thoughts, and usurp the places which should be given to the Lord's good and true principles of spiritual life.

These are the riches, with which it is hard for a man to enter into the kingdom of heaven; because, loving such riches, we trust in them, rather than in character and regeneration. In heaven, i.e., in a heavenly quality of character, riches of all kinds must be loved as uses, as means to good ends, and not as ends, themselves.

Illustrations.

See, for instance, even in this country, and still more so in the monarchical countries of Europe, many men of mean and low character, and of very limited intelligence, who hold themselves above their fellows, merely because their remote ancestors were men of respectable abilities, or tyrants of world-wide fame, or robbers of unusual atrocity and success; priding themselves, often, in the greatness of their family, in its descent from ancestors possessing unusually complete qualifications for the infernal regions. Such pride is a very foolish thing.

Spiritually, in the fields of human society, as in the wheat fields, it is the empty head that holds itself highest above its fellows. Men may be highly intellectual, and yet spiritually empty. And Jesus, Himself, though Divinely intelligent, was meek and lowly. And the higher the angels are, in character, the more humility they have, and the less self-assertion.

See, too, how the world regards position, rather than character. In politics, see how men of very inferior abilities, and great only in the enormous quantity of their self-assertion, clamor and intrigue, and corruptly bargain, for official positions, for which they must know themselves to be utterly unqualified; hoping to exalt their own littleness by the dignity of the coveted office. And when they attain their ends, what are such riches to them, but thorns, choking whatever of good and true life they might have enjoyed, had they been satisfied with an humble life of quiet usefulness. And especially is the danger increased, when this lust for mental and material riches is linked with too great anxiety about the cares of this world. Not without serious concern, can the thoughtful observer look upon the high-pressure life of strain and worry, that now prevails in America, especially in the West. The physical development of the country is progressing so rapidly, that both the attention and the affections of the majority of men seem to be absorbed in material things, to the exclusion of any profound interest in spiritual culture. In the mad race for supremacy, society is being honeycombed with moral decay. The greed of gain, and ambition for fame, take form in all kinds of fraud, personal and official. Trickery and deception abound, in all departments of life. Extravagance and dissipation are rampant. Is it any wonder that these thorns of the senses choke out the higher life of the spirit? A Question Answered. In these circumstances, what shall the young man do, who finds himself, with fine sensibilities and ardent hopes, yet filled with a spirit of ambition? Let him clearly put it to his own rational intelligence, that entire absorption in the world's life and pleasures, means the closing of his soul to the grandest and noblest phases of human life, as found in the culture of the spirit. Let him "Seek, first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," for, only as he becomes spiritual-minded can he, innocently and usefully, and under Divine guidance, engage in the duties and pleasures of the world.

If he does not hold fast to the truths of the Lord's Word, his material and mental riches, and his worldly cares, will be as dangerous thorns, growing with amazing rapidity, until his mind is full of them; and then they will choke all the good seeds of heavenly truths that his loving Lord, through the loving ministrations of his parents and teachers, and of the angels, may have sown in his youthful mind.

"If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." As long as we regard any material or selfish mental possessions as real riches, we shall be like the rich young ruler, who went to Jesus, inquiring, "What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life," and Who, when he learned that he must give up what he had regarded as his best possessions, felt sorrowful, and went his way, unwilling to follow

the Lord, in a life of humble usefulness; unwilling to secure heaven, at the cost of denying himself.
The Growth Of Thorns.

Painfully, and yet frequently, are we called to see the degeneration of character consequent upon the growth of these mental thorns in the minds of the young, of both sexes. Beginning with indulgence of the temper, and of the sensuous taste for things of the world, to the forgetfulness of spiritual principles, the character degenerates into a condition of general unfaithfulness to moral and spiritual obligations. And it slides down the descending scale, until heartless unfaithfulness to the marriage-relation fills the measure of iniquity, and sounds the death-knell of all the decent, peaceful and heavenly virtues which belong to "the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."

Personal Application. Have you not, dear reader, often felt discouraged, at the slow growth of spirituality in your mind? If you have, and if you have diligently searched for the cause of delay, you have found it in some evil feeling, or false thought, or sinful habit, which you have allowed to choke your wheat. Some infirmity of temper, or unkindness of feeling, or censoriousness of thought, or unguarded habit of the tongue, has been your hindrance to spiritual growth. And if you have afterwards attained any better growth, it has been by a resolute self-denial, in the very line of your discovered weakness.

Success lies before us all; but we must work in the right way. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Then "there shall be no longer, to the house of Israel, a pricking brier nor a grieving thorn."

Discipline Providential. The trials and disciplines of our life are permitted, in the Divine Providence, as a means of keeping down the growth of our thorns. For, in many cases, an easy prosperity would be a most dangerous circumstance, helping our thorns rather than our wheat. And yet how hard we generally struggle against the very discipline which is Divinely permitted for our greatest good, and which we might make the means of great spiritual progress.

It may seem singular that the danger is said to come to us from the two extremes, cares of the world, and the riches which are supposed to free us from cares. But the worldly anxiety of care, and the bad use of riches, both spring from the same principle of selfishness, which, in one case, struggles to procure the means of indulgence, and, in the other, grows indolent and sensuous, by indulgence.

Correspondential Thorns.

How sadly appropriate it was, that the evil nation which crucified their Savior-God, should, with intended mockery have crowned Him with thorns, substituting their own evils for His crown of spiritual life. And it is even so with ourselves, that the less we shun evils as sins, and the more we fall into indulgence of our evils, the more we "put good for evil, and evil for good," confusing our own minds, darkening our own spiritual intelligence, and choking our mental wheat with the thorns of sin. The days of our purest life are also the states of our clearest intelligence. Where The Fault Lies. In all the three cases of failure of the seed, (on the wayside, in the stony ground, and among thorns) the fault was not with the seed, but with the soil. The Sower sows good seed, only; and He sows broadcast. And so, in all circumstances, the seed of the Lord's truth is sown upon our minds.

Perhaps our self-love would like to assign our spiritual failures to our sickness, or our poverty, or our business-cares, or bad luck, or the wrong-doings of others. But these are never causes of our failures. The cause lies always in our own hearts, and in our own lives.

It is not enough to see that good seed is sown in our minds, but also that the soil of our minds is in condition to do its part. In the three failures mentioned in the parable, the first was because the soil was not in condition to receive the seed; the second was in poor condition; and the third soil, though good enough, was too full of other things. In the first case, the seed did not spring up, at all; in the second, the plant withered and was scorched, before its maturity; and in the third, the plants were choked by thorns, before maturity. In each case, the mind of the man is at fault; it either rejects, or perverts, or suffocates, the truths of the Lord's Word. When truths are taught us from the Lord, or good suggested, our rational faculty must be turned upward and inward, to receive the light of heaven, and to bring that light down in its application to the things of our life on earth. Our rational faculty must submit itself to the Lord, and be regenerated. Then our minds will come into the condition of good ground. The Good Ground.

"But other seed fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. . . . He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth;" or, as it is expressed in Luke, "But that on the good ground are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." To hear the Word is to hear the truth; not merely to hear the statement of doctrine, but also intelligently to hear the teachings of the Word, as principles of life. And to understand the Word is not only to have an intellectual comprehension of its meaning, but also to take it into the understanding, as a principle of life; it is to understand from the heart, and in the love of truth. Our Lord said, "Take heed how ye hear." Those who always hear the truth with doubts, and who oppose it with natural reasonings, imagine themselves to be intelligent. But the fact is precisely the contrary. Genuine spiritual intelligence is the result of a receptive state of the will, which induces an openness of the understanding towards the light of spiritual truth. Properly to receive spiritual truth, we need to have "an honest and good heart." We must be disposed to believe. A well-disposed heart, and simplicity of character; will use the truth, to live upon.

Illustration.

Thomas, the apostle, would not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, until he had been given proof, by demonstration to his senses. But Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus plainly taught Thomas that an interior openness to truth is better than an external demonstration of truth. "He that is of God, heareth God's words."

He who feels no especial need of the truth, and no pressing desire for it, is generally in a state of doubt about the truth; but those who are longing for the truth, for the purpose of amending their lives, are well-disposed towards the truth. They hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts; and when the truth comes to them, they are inwardly in condition to recognize it to be truth. They see that it is what they want, and what they can practically use, in the growth of their spiritual character. They are as good ground. They have a rational and affectionate understanding of the truth. They give their profound attention to it. The truth does not do permanent good to anyone, unless he has good ground in his will, his heart, which impels him to take the truth, not as a matter

of notions, or of speculation, but for use, in shunning evils because they are sins, and in doing good.

We can easily see what great advantage a man has, whose will is well-disposed towards the truth. Otherwise, his mind is as hard ground; and then the man is not in an affirmative state towards the truth. And all the bad mental birds, all the false thoughts of his natural and sensuous reasonings, will come and peck at the truth, until there is nothing left of it, in his mind. In that condition a man never really gets hold of the truth. His mind remains in a negative state. Hence, there is great need to keep our natural reasonings under control of our rational thought, and to refuse to allow our senses to pass judgment upon things that are beyond their comprehension.

Quality Of Good Ground. The characteristics of good ground are softness of soil, depth, richness, and freedom from obstructions. So, in the mind, good ground must be soft, ready to receive the seed of truth, not hardened by the indulgence of evils and falses. And it must be deep, profound in its capacity to receive and hold the truth. A mere intellectual readiness to take ideas may cover a hardened condition of the heart; it may be merely a thin layer of earth, over a bed of rock. The mind, too, like the good ground, must be kept in clean condition, free from thorns and weeds. The cares of the world, and the pleasures of the senses, must be kept under control of the spirit.

Many of the conditions of the ground can be controlled by the farmer. The ground can be kept in good condition, by proper plowing, weeding and general care. So the man must do his part of the work, before the Lord can produce the harvest. A man must learn truth, from the doctrine of the Word, as taught in the Church. He must know who the Lord, is, and what He is, and who the neighbor is, and what love is, what is good and true and useful, and what is evil and false and sinful. He must learn about his own spiritual life, and its possibilities. When we love to know these things for use, we are in the love of truth. Then our minds are in the condition of a field prepared and ready for the seed. And the Lord, as the Sower, scatters His truth broadcast over our minds. The seed, the sun and the rain, are given to all kinds of ground. But the results are different. So, "the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works;" "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." But the results are according to the quality and quantity of the soil.

On, Or In, The Ground. In the case of the good ground, the seed fell not only upon the ground, but also into it. The mind opened to the truth, and gave it an interior reception. The seed penetrated into the richness of the soil, into the depths of the will, as well as into the understanding. In this condition, the mind keeps the Word. "Give me understanding, that I may keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Yet there are some, who seem to think that all that is necessary is for the truth to pass through the mind, in the memory, leaving its impression, and passing out, again, making room for something else. But no truth becomes a living reality to a man, until he keeps it; until it abides with him, as one of his mental family. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Truth is of use, only as it becomes an abiding principle of a man's life, embodied in his deeds.

Varieties Of Good.

It may be asked, Why is the mental ground called good, when yet it has need to be made good? But the early good of the mind is natural, not spiritual. It is not like the ground bearing a full harvest, but like the ground ready for the seed. It is well-disposed. The mind is always under preparation by the Divine Providence. From our infancy, the Lord implants in our minds, states of good affection and of true thought, which, in the New-Church phraseology, we call “remains,” remnants, things of an interior life, laid up in our interiors, by the Lord, to bring us into good condition. These “remains” are means of preparing our minds for the reception of the seed of Divine Truth.

If we love these inward things of life, and seek to cultivate them, they enable the Lord to pour His heavenly influences upon our minds, and into them. But, if we despise and resist the promptings of these “remains,” we harden our minds against all other truth and good. As we see our tendencies towards evils, if we resist them, we shall grow to be averse to evils. But, if we love, cherish and practice these evils, we shall choke up the better things, the “remains,” in our inward minds. And then our minds will grow hard, beaten down by the constant tread of our selfish passions, and affording no openness to the seeds of the Lord’s Word.

Thus, often we are responsible for the hardness of our minds, because that hardness is a result of our own evil life. We may, in that condition, have abundance of knowledge, but no disposition to use it, in regeneration. But the good ground of an “honest heart” brings forth abundant fruit. Where the seed of living truth finds any good soil, it soon shows its vitality, in its growth. The “honest heart” receives truth with genuine and devout affection, for the government of the life. The ground represents the love, the affection. And the differences in those who receive the seed are differences in their ground, that is, in the quantity and the quality of their affections.

Intelligence, alone, does not bear fruit in regeneration, as light, in winter, does not produce vegetation. But intelligence must be united to affection for the truth, as the light of the sun must be united with the heat of the sun, as in summer, to produce the harvest.

Bearing Fruit. The heart that is good ground, goes on to bear fruit; to do the things which truth teaches; to cease doing the evil, and to do good. Love to the Lord, and charity towards the neighbor, are ultimated, or embodied, in a life of usefulness. The proof of the goodness of the ground is in its productiveness. So is it in regeneration: the evidence of our regeneration is the increase of our practical goodness and usefulness. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Our increase of goodness may be only thirty-fold, but it must be actual increase. That which does not increase, comes to no spirituality.

Individual Growth. The parable refers not only to different classes of minds, but also to different states and degrees of regeneration, in each individual mind; We notice, in the parable, that the individual ground becomes better, in each succeeding condition. The seeds enter more deeply into the soil, they grow better, and they endure longer. So, in the regeneration, every regenerating mind goes through these conditions, in its progressive growth; it meets these dangers, and conquers them, under the Lord’s providence.

See the force of the parable, as it refers to the Church. What constitutes the Church? Not doctrine, alone, but life according to doctrine, the fruit of truth. All who have doctrine are not truly in the Church. In the parable, all receive the truth, at first, into the memory. But only the good ground

holds the truth until it bears fruit. So, in the Church, it is not doctrine, alone, but a life of love and usefulness, which makes a man a Christian. No truth can save a man, until he lives by it.

Thirty-Fold, Etc.

Even with good men, there are degrees of reception of truth, both in quantity and in quality; "Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." These three degrees of fruitfulness are the three discrete degrees of regenerate life, the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural.

All these numbers are multiples of ten. The number, ten, denotes "remains," the states of life implanted in the interiors of the growing spirit. If these "remains" are developed into the conscious life of the man, to the natural degree, only, this result will be accomplished by simple obedience to the commandments, as external laws. In this state there are three tens, or thirty. Three denotes fullness, as regards truth.

If the man can be led to the next higher, or more interior, step of spiritual growth, he will come into the spiritual degree, the state of intelligent love of truth, as a known principle. Then he brings forth fruit sixty-fold.

Six denotes a state of mental combat, as in the six days of creation, or regeneration, and the six days of labor, before the seventh day, or complete state.

One hundred, as a round number, represents a full state, as to goodness, a full state of progress. Those who bear fruit one hundred-fold, are those who come to the full state of complete regeneration, the celestial state, or degree of fill! and supreme love to good, and to the Lord. In this state, the "remains" are fully developed into the man's conscious life.

Thus, the three kinds of productiveness in the soil represent the three conditions, or discrete degrees, of regenerate life, as seen in the three heavens. And, on the other hand, the three conditions of failure to produce fruit, represent the states of perverted life, in the three hells. Here are represented complete conditions, confirmations in both good and evil. But the celestial state will not seem the most attractive, except to those who are, spiritually, in condition to appreciate it. There are sentimental persons, to whom the moonlight is more beautiful than the sunlight, the blossom more attractive than the ripened fruit, and the youthful maiden more lovely than the mature matron. Such taste belongs to the early states of Faith, rather than to the harvest of profound and interior Love. In more advanced states, the maturer things are recognized as the most beautiful, as a principle embodied in useful action is more lovely than an unproven sentiment; and a celestial angel is most fully in the I measure of a man."

Readers Of The New-Church Writings.

Swedenborg, speaking of the state of the world, says, "There are five classes of those who read my writings: the first reject them, altogether, being confirmed in other doctrines, or in no truth at all. The second receive them as matters of curiosity. The third receive them intellectually, and are in some degree pleased with them; but when they require a motive to govern their lives, they remain where they were before. The fourth receive them persuasively, and are in some degree led to renounce evils as sins, and to do good. The fifth receive them with delight, and confirm them in their lives." Such are the conditions of men's minds as to the reception of the New-Dispensation. The Harvest. The more fully the truth takes possession of the mind, the greater will be the spiritual

yield, in the harvest. The Lord always works for the greatest harvest. But, in each case, He can bring forth only what the state of the man will allow. He cannot “gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.” “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” And, indeed, this will be a motive for the good man, in trying to do the best work, that it most displays the goodness and greatness of the Lord. The more we truly and spiritually glorify our Lord, the more and the better will be our spiritual fruit; and the more we glorify ourselves, the less will be our good fruit. The seeds that fall upon the wayside, the stony ground, and the rocky ground, do not injure the ground. And so, spiritually, one reason why our Lord taught in parables, was that men might, if prepared, hear and understand the truth; and if unprepared, they might escape injury by truth that would pass over them, without making any impression upon them, which they could profane.

Nearly everyone supposes he is interested in the truth, and in search of it. But he does not always heed the quality of his interest in the truth, whether he is superficially or profoundly interested. If we find our minds hardened against the truth, we must plow up the wayside. If our hearts are as rock, we must have them softened and broken up by love to our Lord, that the soil may be deepened. “Is not My Word like a fire, saith the Lord: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” If we find thorns in our wheat-fields, we must cut down the thorns.

“Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.” Seek regeneration; and then “he that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, doubtless shall return again, after many days, with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him.”

Hearing. In the Lord's temple men seek the truth. And do they fully recognize the important fact that two things are necessary to the teaching of truth, good preaching and good hearing? There must be not only good seed, but also good ground. No amount of work in the pulpit, will sow the seeds of truth in unheeding pews. But good hearing, in the congregation, is apt to induce good preaching. “Take heed how ye hear?” Hear heartily, with open hearts, seeking the truth, for use in regeneration. Our Lord gives very few directions about preaching, but He says much about hearing. Hearers should always remember that it is their duty, as well as the preacher's, to go to church prepared, by shutting out the sensuous world of business, politics and pleasures of the flesh. And if both the hearers and the preacher always keep in mind the fact that the Lord is the only real Sower of the Divine truth, and that they are only His humble helpers, both the hearing and the preaching will be better and more useful. “Who hath ears, to hear, let him hear.”

06. The Tares Among the Wheat.

The Tares Among the Wheat.

(Matthew 13:24-30; Matthew 13:36-43.) Infernal Efforts To Overcome Divine Influences. The Struggle. Our minds are battle-grounds between good and evil influences. Heaven seeks to win us to its blessings, and hell strives to drag us into its miseries. And the choice between them lies with ourselves.

Resemblances.

We notice that this parable somewhat resembles that of "The Sower." And, in fact, there is a close connection between all the parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. These parables form a connected and progressive series, showing the progress of regeneration in the good man, and of the confirmation of evil in the bad man.

Distinctions. In the parable of "The Sower," we are taught about the sowing of truth in men's minds, to arouse, in them, a new and spiritual life. That parable treats of the different kinds of reception given to the Lord's truth, by different classes of minds. And now the parable of "The Tares" exhibits the perils which attend the good seed of truth, even after it has been sown in the good soil of a loving heart. These dangers arise from the efforts of evil spirits to counteract the work of the Divine Sower. In this parable, the trouble is not with the nature of the ground, but with the work of the devils. There are two sowers, the Lord, sowing good seed, for a harvest of heavenly life, and the devil, sowing bad seed, and secretly propagating an infernal life. The Kingdom Of Heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the Church of the Lord, in the heavens and on the earth; it is wherever the Lord is acknowledged as King, and loved and obeyed as such. It is not merely a place, but also a state, a condition, in which the Lord's love and wisdom are the ruling principles in men. The Lord, by His holy Word, sows the seeds of His truth in the minds of men. The good seed is the Divine Truth, from the Divine Love; it is truth, carrying within it, as a germ, all heavenly good. The Children.

It is said that the good seed are the children of the heavenly kingdom. Personally, these are the regenerate men whose spiritual Father is the Lord, and whose spiritual mother is the Church. Abstractly, the seed is the truth; but men in whom the truth is, are figuratively called the seed, because the seed of truth makes such men to be what they are; the germ of a new life, producing fruit in those men, gives them their characteristic quality. The children of our mental kingdom are our affections and thoughts. The good seed of Divine truth, controlling the character of the regenerate man, makes him a living form of that truth, a human embodiment of that principle. The Field.

"The field," where the seed is sown, "is the world." It is the mental world, the natural mind, which is the world's part of man's mind. The principles of good and truth are implanted in the interior parts of man's mind, his spiritual mind; but they must be implanted in his outward or natural mind, also. The Church-militant, oil earth, must hold and govern man's natural mind, that he may be prepared

for the Church-triumphant, in heaven. The Lord sows the seed of His holy truth, not only in man's spirit, but also in man's natural mind, that it may grow up, and govern his outward life. The Church is in the world, though not of the world, in its character, not worldly in quality. When our Lord said, "And this gospel shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come," He meant not only that the gospel should reach all parts of the earth, but also that it should reach and influence all parts of the natural mind, that part of the mind which deals with the things of the world. Then should be "the end" of the unregenerate state, as the man passes into a regenerate condition.

Meeting Evil. And it is in the world, also, that we come into contact with evil influences. In the heaven of our inward spirit, the angels come to us, and operate upon us, to lead us to heavenly things. But in the mental world of our natural minds, engaged with natural things, evil influences are about us, claiming our attention, and making their suggestions. And thus, in our natural minds, good and evil influences struggle for the mastery. The Lord sows good seed, but the devil sows tares. Thus, it is in the world that we form our character, according to our life.

Sleeping. In our higher and spiritual life, we are spiritually awake. But when we descend into external and natural life, amid the things of the senses, we are, comparatively, asleep, dull and drowsy towards the inward life. This is the sleep indicated in the text. The Literal Meaning. In the literal sense, the text refers to a mean act of a cowardly and malicious man, who desired to injure another, and who, in the dead of night, sowed the seeds of an evil weed among the freshly-sown wheat of his victim. The "tares" mentioned in the text are not the plants commonly called tares, for these are often intentionally sown for fodder: and they can be easily distinguished from wheat, at all stages of their growth. The word "zizania," translated "tares," does not occur in the Bible, except in this parable. The common judgment of investigators has decided that it "zizania" is the "zowan" of the Arabs of Palestine, the weed called "darnel," which greatly resembles wheat, especially in its early stages of growth. It is also called "bastard wheat." The danger of rooting up the wheat, with the darnel, is, then, two-fold; a mechanical danger of dragging up the roots of the wheat while pulling up the darnel, and a mental danger of mistaking the growing wheat-plant for the darnel. The darnel seeds are poisonous.

Mental Tares.

These tares, or darnel, represent false principles, originating in evil, and leading to evil. "The tares are the children of the wicked one;" i.e., they are outbirths of evil and false principles. Or, personally, they are the wicked persons, in whom these false principles are embodied, and who are forms of such false principles.

Thorns, in the parable of "The Sower," represent the spontaneous outgrowth of the unregenerate mind, the lusts of the flesh, the hereditary tendencies toward evil. But the tares are sown in the mind. They represent the false suggestions that are secretly insinuated into the mind, by evil spirits. While the Lord sows truth, the devil sows falsities, even in the good ground. And the devil does his sowing while men sleep; that is, while they are immersed in the things of the senses, and paying little attention to spiritual things. These suggestions reach us by means of our natural tendencies to evil and falsity. Very naturally, we suppose these suggestions of evil spirits to be our own thoughts. And the enemy goes on his way, unsuspected. We do not recognize the origin of our sensuous thoughts. The Devil.

It is said that “the enemy that sowed” tares, “is the devil.” The devil is the personal name of the hells. Accurately speaking, the devil is the evil principle of self-love, which opposes the Lord. Every evil man, fixed and confirmed in an evil character, is a devil, because he is a form of self-love, in embodiment of self-love. The old idea of one great personal devil, is an impersonation of the principle of self-love. The language of the Bible concerning the devil is figurative. There is no such devil, who was once an angel in heaven. All devils were once men on earth. Men make themselves to be devils, by perverting the life which the Lord gives them. Hell was made by man, not by the Lord. The devil of self-love is an enemy to men, and to the Lord. Every evil principle in our hearts, and every false thought in our intellects, is an enemy to our souls, and to our Lord. The more we turn to evils, and listen to the promptings of evil spirits, the more we turn away from the Lord, and from heaven. Nothing that any devil would suggest to its could be true, because “he was a liar from the beginning, and there is no truth in him.” But the difficulty is to induce us to recognize the fact that the influences which sow wrong notions in our minds are our enemies. While we are asleep in our sensuous indifference to spiritual life, false suggestions seem to promise us pleasure.

Illustration.

See, through the centuries of Church-history, how the devils have sown their tares among the Lord’s wheat, even in the Churches. Whenever the Church has grown popular and worldly, it has grown to be sleepy in spirit; and the devils have taken advantage of this condition, to sow heresies, and to justify men’s sins. How often the devils have done their cunning work, in the name of the Church, and of the Lord, and then have gone their way, leaving men ignorant of the actual quality of their own characters! The Lord has had to say to the men of the Church, in every age, as He had to say, even to the beloved disciples, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”

How often the devils sow their infernal seed of false persuasions in our too-ready minds, when we know not the origin of our thoughts; and when we discover their quality only by their results; knowing them only by their fruits. Our hereditary tendencies to evil attract the presence and the influence of evil spirits. The Blade Springing Up.

“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares, also.” When the truth begins to take root in our minds, and to grow to fruit, making changes in our minds, then we discover, also, the tares: then we begin to see something of the character of the things which the evil spirits have suggested to us. As the truth begins to affect our will, we see that opposite things, things of selfish and sinful life, have been sown in our natural minds. We knew these things were in our minds, before, but we did not know their real character.

Discovering The Tares.

“Then appeared the tares, also;” i.e., then it appeared that they were tares. Before that time, we supposed they were wheat. As the tares grow among the wheat, at first they appear alike; but, the more fully each is developed, the more their difference is seen. In their fruit they are most fully distinguished; “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

We are best able to discover the quality of our own evils and falses, by the growth of good and truth, in our own minds; for these reveal the opposite character of the evils and falses. As we grow to be better, our evils are shown to be worse. A bad man will not give up evil habits, except in the

outward appearance, and from policy. But the better a man becomes, the more he feels a repugnance towards his own bad habits. As the wheat matures and shows its character, the tares show their different character. Until we are sufficiently interested in the truth to love it, and to live by it, its influence is not strong enough to reveal to us the real character of our mental "tares." Only from the love of good, can evil be thoroughly distinguished. The Householder. But when the servants of the householder discover the tares, they ask, "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it tares?" In the supreme sense, the Householder is the Lord, who, holds our inward house, our mind, in His keeping. He is called, also, the Son of Man, or the Divine Truth. So, in another sense, the householder is the Divine Truth, which holds our inward house, our mind, under its influence. The Servants. The servants, who serve the householder, are the knowledge, the teachings which we know, and which serve our mind. These knowledge of truth discover the character of the false suggestions which have also taken root in our natural minds. As we grow to appreciate, more and more, the character of the truths which the Lord has taught us in His holy Word, the more we discover that certain other things are in our natural mind, suggesting an evil life. And we are surprised. For we know that the Lord sowed good seed in His field, in our mind. "Whence, then, hath it tares?" Why should these evil and false things come up, in our minds, to trouble us? We are ready, we think, to uproot these evils and falses. So we go to the Lord, in His Word, and to the Divine Truth, as it is in our inward minds; and we ask about the state of our minds. We do not doubt our ability, and our entire willingness, to put away all our evil and false things. And our Lord, by His truth, teaches us that these unregenerate things, which begin to show themselves in our minds, are the work of our spiritual enemy, the devil of self-love, which is not yet really and fully conquered, and which attracts the self-love of evil spirits mentally to associate with us. Our inquiry on the subject is induced by the Lord, Himself, so that we may understand our own human nature, and so that we may more fully acknowledge the Lord as our Adviser and our Master.

Illustration. The moment a man, from natural self-love, begins to regard as good, anything that is separated from the Lord, then evil is created, in the man's mind. For evil is the perversion of good; it is good separated from its Divine Source, and its quality thus changed to the opposite; as blood, the medium of physical life, in the body, when separated from connection with the heart, becomes a thing of danger and of death.

False ideas are often very much like truths, only they are turned to favor self-love, instead of leading to the Lord. And, in such cases, the man cannot put away such falses, until he reforms his life, and thus restores his connection with heaven and the Lord; and thus comes into condition practically to see the difference between false and true things.

Gathering The Tares. When we first catch a glimpse of the character of the false persuasions which are in our minds, and which we fear will bring forth evil fruits, we are very confident that we can uproot them. With the hasty zeal of novitiates we want to sweep away all things that are not as we think they should be. We would call down fire from heaven upon them. But our Lord teaches us that we are not yet in condition to do such work thoroughly; and that, in fact, the angels are the ones to do it.

Look, for instance, at Peter's zeal, when he declared he would follow the Lord through anything, and never forsake Him. And see how Peter was astonished at the Lord's prophecy of his denial.

And yet he did deny the Lord, afterwards. When the servants asked the householder, "Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up?" he replied, "Nay, lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up, also, the wheat, with them. Let both grow together, until the harvest." "The harvest is the end of the world;" i.e., the end of worldliness, in us. The general character of the mind keeps pace with regeneration. We cannot put away evil and false things, except as we outgrow them.

Notice that the servants knew the tares to be tares but the time had not come to uproot them. So, when we see the character of our false persuasions, we can understand what they are, and what is to be done with them, when the right time comes.

Illustration.

Take an illustration of the time of uprooting falses. Suppose you see that a false idea has been growing in your mind; and you determine to uproot it, because it is false. But you go to work in your own power, and are self-confident. Now, you think you have expelled the false idea. But you have dragged up, at the same time, your humble, growing trust in the Lord. It would have been better to acknowledge the false character of the falsity, and then to make an effort to outgrow it, in living by the opposite truth, in the name of the Lord.

We cannot suddenly expel from our minds all ideas that are not strictly true. But, by a gradual development of the good and true principles of our inward minds, we can outgrow the falses of our natural minds. For instance, as we grow into an intelligent knowledge of the internal and spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, we outgrow the false ideas that were formed from the merely literal sense. In our earlier stages of regeneration, we are liable to make many mistakes as to what things are false. See, for instance, how many natural-minded men, in their haste to put away false notions, go too far, and uproot from their minds all ideas of a personal God, and of the Divine character of Jesus Christ. When we learn the Lord's truth, and love it, and live by it, and so form our minds in a good life, we come to harvest. Then the good that is in us, from the Lord, sees the character of the false things in the natural mind; and our hearts are brought into a state of complete aversion towards such falses. As we live ourselves into good and true principles, we live ourselves out of evil and false principles.

Separating Falses.

Suppose a man finds himself imagining that riches and fame are really good things, for their own sakes. Now he cannot put away those ideas, merely by seeing, at times, that they are false. But, as he grows into the love of the neighbor, and the love of being useful, he will outgrow the false notions suggested by a lingering worldliness. The true and the false will be fully separated in the harvest of confirmed goodness. Practically, we can reject false ideas gradually, only, and as our character grows in goodness. And, for this reason, the Lord always protects the freedom of our will; for a man cannot be regenerated until his will consents to the change in character. And to root up the tares, prematurely, would be to force the man's will.

If it were otherwise, men would reject their false ideas, and put away their evil habits, as soon as they once discovered these things to be false and evil. But they do not do so. And, in fact, except in their better moments, they even defend and excuse their false notions and their bad habits.

But, as the man becomes regenerate, gradually his unregenerate thoughts and habits will be thawed from him, like icicles before the noon-day sun of spring-time. You cannot altogether reject from your mind a falsity, until you reject the evil inclination which delights in that falsity. Of course, a man must, at all times, make an effort to put away all things evil and false. But his success will depend upon how much his heart is in the work. And this will depend upon the state of his regeneration. In fact, he can get rid of the tares, only in so far as he resists the enemy who sows the tares. He must shun evils because they are sins against God. And he cannot do any good, except in the degree in which he shuns evils, and ceases to do evil. But no man will shun evil because it is sin, until he has learned to love good, and to hate evil. As our hearts grow warm in the love of good, our eyes open more fully in the light of truth; and we see things differently.

Illustration. In winter you cannot distinguish the living tree from the dead tree, by outward appearance; but the summer, the season of full development, will soon display the condition of the trees. So, in our minds, the light of truth, without the warmth of love, will make little progress in growth.

Even in the Church, possessed of the truth, see how many heresies have arisen, and how many evils have been practiced. All have the same Bible; but the devils of self-love, and the love of rule, have sown monstrous tares in the Churches.

Why Are Tares Permitted?

It may be asked, Why does the Lord permit these tares to be sown? For two reasons: in the first place, men's own hereditary tendencies to evil lay them open to suggestions of evil spirits, and incline them to, hear, and to favor, such suggestions. And in the second place, such tares can, in the Divine Providence, be used for the good of men, as temptations, which allow men to see their own tendencies, and thus to put them away. Though men sleep, the Lord never does. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber or sleep." As men learn the truth, and seek to live by it, the evil spirits excite men's natural tendencies to evil. Thus men discover their own real condition. And, without this discovery, there could not be any regeneration. Without truth, men would not know their evils to be evils. And without temptations, they would not be able to reject evils. Thus the work of the devils is, in the Divine Providence, turned to the good of the regenerating man. The Angels. The Divine Truth acts in judgment, and expels from the man's character all things that are opposite to his ruling-love and his daily life. Divine truths are the angels, who act as the reapers of the harvest. They gather the wheat, the good, into heaven, as the Lord's barn; and they bind the evils and falses into bundles, and burn them; i.e., they set in order, or classify, the various things of our minds, putting every principle of regenerate life in its place, in heaven, and rejecting every infernal principle to its place in hell. The Fires Of Hell, Etc. The fires of hell are the evil lusts of evil hearts. "All things that offend" are falses: "all things that do iniquity" are evils.

"Wailing" is the sorrow which comes from false principles. "Gnashing of teeth" is the clashing of false reasonings from evil lusts. "But the righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father;" i.e., they shall be in the active use and, enjoyment of love and wisdom, the heat and the light of the spiritual sun. The text does not mean that the righteous shall be paraded before the heavens, to make a paltry show of themselves; but that their character shall shine with love and wisdom, and shall exalt the goodness and wisdom of the Lord. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven."

We notice that the servants, representing our knowledge of truth, are not to do the work of separating the good from the evil, in our minds; but that this work must be done by the angels; i.e., by truths confirmed in the life, truth from the heavenly side, not from the earthly side.

We are placed between two kingdoms, heaven and hell.

Influences from both kingdoms operate upon us. Seeds from both are sown in our natural minds. As we appreciate the heavenly seed, we need to go on and cultivate it, and not to be cast down by the sight of some tares among our wheat. For, if we press on to the harvest of our good principles, our Lord will give us light and strength to put away the tares. This parable teaches us not to expect that this earth will be, to us, an easy paradise, as soon as our regeneration begins. All things that offend cannot then be plucked from our minds. "In the world, ye shall have tribulation." We must overcome the world in ourselves. Then, like our Lord, we shall find the world our servant, not our master. Our Final Home. The God-given destiny of every man is a home in heaven. That home is open to us, and our place in it is prepared for us, by Divine Love. But whether we shall occupy that place, is a question which we must decide for ourselves, by our life on the earth. The Sower goes forth to sow, in our minds. He sows good seed only. He sows in the bright, warm daylight.

But, at the same time, the cunning devils observe what the Lord is doing for us; and stealthily, under cover of mental night, in times when we are spiritually asleep, engrossed in the things of the senses, they come upon us, unawares, and sow in our unheeding minds, the infernal seeds of false and evil principles. And we have need to keep ourselves awake to the realities of our human life, that our Lord may succeed in His heavenly work within us; and that the devils may fail in their infernal schemes. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

07. The Mustard Seed.

The Mustard Seed.

(Matthew 13:31-32.) The Growth Of Practiced Truth.

Life.

Truth, like seed, is full of vitality.

There is, in the universe, one self-existent life, that of the Creator; the only real life, the inward vitality, which fills and vitalizes all created things. And each truth, being of the Lord, and from the Lord, is inwardly filled with His life. Every truth contains within it the germ of a complete system of intellectual life. And that system is developed by a process of orderly growth, like the growth of a seed into a tree. The Kingdom Of Heaven. The parable teaches us of the first conscious beginnings of our spiritual life, and their progressive development. The kingdom of heaven is the government of the Divine Love, by means of the Divine Wisdom. It is wherever the Lord is known and loved as the spiritual King. Our Lord, Himself, has told us where that kingdom is located. He said, "The kingdom of God is within you." The sensuous Jews supposed the kingdom of heaven to be a comfortable condition of things on earth, after the coming of the Messiah, to exalt the Jews to a supremacy which they had long desired. But the kingdom of God is the rule of spiritual principles in the minds and lives of men. And men enter that kingdom, not by going to a certain place, but by entering into certain states of character and life. Spiritually, the change from living in the world to living in heaven, is a change from a worldly character to a heavenly character. In this sense, the kingdom of heaven is the Church of the Lord, in the heavens; and on the earth, also, as far as the latter Church is composed of regenerate persons. This spiritual kingdom of heaven, this rule of heavenly principles in the human mind, "is like to a grain of mustard seed," because the growth of this kingdom of love and faith, in the mind of man, is like the growth of the seed in the earth.

Mustard Seed. A "seed" is a truth, in which is a germ of good. The mustard seed is introduced into the text, because, from its nature and circumstances, the correspondence of the literal and spiritual meanings is made markedly strong. Mustard seed contains great heat. The heat in the seed represents the warmth of love, which lies within the truth, in our minds, when we are in earnest about the truth. Of course, in the beginning, that earnestness is merely natural, and united with many selfish desires. But, in the course of regeneration, we outgrow this external condition, and enter into spiritual earnestness. But natural earnestness is the only kind we have, at first; and it serves the purpose of urging us to do something. The Man, And The Field. The man, who took the mustard seed, and sowed it in the field, is the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Divine Man. The "field" in which He sows the seed of truth, is our natural mind. Mustard seed thus represents truth, in which there is good affection, and which is sown in our natural mind, by the Lord, in order that we may become spiritual-minded. The Smallness Of The Seed.

It is said that this mustard seed is "the least of all seeds." In Oriental lands, the mustard grows to be a tree, ten or twelve feet in height. And, literally, the text speaks in the usual manner of Oriental

language, expressing things strongly. The mustard seed was known as a small seed. "Small as a grain of mustard-seed," was a common Oriental saying. It is found, for instance, in the Koran of Mahomet; "O my son, verily, every matter, whether good or bad, though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, God will bring the same to light." Our Lord uses the term "mustard-seed," to show how small is the beginning of man's spiritual life, and yet how it is capable of great growth.

Spiritual Mustard-Seed.

But, spiritually, the grain of mustard-seed is truly the least of all seeds, because it represents the least beginning of spiritual life, when the man, though he has begun to love the truth, and to do good by it, yet thinks he does good from himself, and in his own power. His good is natural, not spiritual.

It is good of the least kind; i.e., of a quality the furthest removed from celestial life. No matter what the quantity of his good may be, it still is of the most external quality, the least spiritual of anything that can be called good. The vital seed of truth has found a lodgment in his mind; and he burns with some zeal, to do good; but his-zeal is external, natural, and joined to much of selfishness. The Seed Sown.

Spiritual mustard-seeds are sown in a man's mind, when he desires to use the truths of the Lord's Word, to shun evils, as sins; when he determines to make the Divine Truth his rule of life, instead of being governed by his own ideas. Naturally, we all love our own ideas, which flow from our self-love. And when we do any good, we naturally claim it as our own, and congratulate ourselves on our own goodness, and also desire to have others praise our goodness. But such goodness is the least of all kinds of goodness. And the truth held in this way, is the least of all seeds of truth, carrying within it the mere undeveloped germ of heavenly good. The Seed Growing. But if we persevere in doing good, our Lord will gradually develop our goodness. And, as we increase in our desire and determination to shun evils, the quality of our good will improve. And then our wisdom will increase, until, as angels, we shall know and understand many things which we cannot now comprehend. Our Lord said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Our seed of truth will grow to be a spreading tree, in which the soaring birds of the mind shall find a lodging place. As we see all good to be the Lord's, and as we do good in the name of the Lord, we shall grow out of our self-importance, and become more spiritual in quality. Then the truths, in our minds, will branch out, and become as growing herbs. And when we fully love the truth for its own sake; and when the truth in our minds is fully united with our affection for the Lord's good and truth; then our truths will be great, spreading trees.

Thus, every truth sown in our minds, carries, within it, the undeveloped capacities of spiritual life. It comes to us as a little babe, in which are the undeveloped germs of a full manhood, "the measure of a man, that is, of an angel." The Branches Of The Tree.

It is said of this tree, that "the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." The branches of the tree, like the arms of the human body, are the extremities. And they represent the ultimates, the externals, the things nearest the surface, the outer part of the mind. Truth, in its most interior aspect, is wisdom, which is truth loved and practiced. In its outmost degree, it is knowledge of facts, or science. In the New-Church, these knowledge of facts, in the memory, are

called scientific, things known. These are in the extremities of the man's mind, the memory. The Birds. The birds represent the intellectual things of our nature, the thoughts, that fly through our minds. In the regenerating man, as he grows in the love and practice of truth, the truth, like a tree, branches out, in his mind, until his mental birds, his rational thoughts, find a lodging-place in the known facts stored in his memory.

Every such fact is then filled with life, for the living things of the spiritual truth find a resting-place in the things of the memory, which branch out, far and wide, through all departments of life.

Lodging-Places. And this is, indeed, a blessed condition, when the principles of our spiritual thought can come out, and make one with the facts of outward life; when the inward world of the spirit becomes the recognized life and soul of all facts and circumstances, in all the branching details of our outward life.

Then, in our minds, the inward spirit of the Word of our Lord finds a lodging-place in the facts of its letter; and the spirit and the letter make one, like the soul and the body of a man. This is, indeed, a gracious promise, as a result of the growth of the truth of God's Word, in the good ground of a sincere heart. In such a life, the literal sense of the Bible opens itself, to exhibit its indwelling spirit of Divine Truth. We "look through nature, up to nature's God." And even every little fact known in our memory, every extreme branch of the great tree of living truth, is easily traced upward and inward, until we see its spiritual counterpart and correspondent, in the living birds of spiritual thoughts, lodged in its branches. In this exalted state of mental life, all the details of the physical creation, sing, in happy chorus, the glad praises of their glorious Creator. Material nature then becomes but the mirror of the spiritual world, reflecting its higher life, as embodied in the grosser things of earth.

Thus, as we progress, in regeneration, every thing that we know becomes a matter of practical life. All the life lessons taught us in childhood, and stored in the memory, become of actual use to us, as we take them up, and fill them with spiritual life. They are bodies, only; but now they are living bodies, moved by the living spirit within.

Breeding-Places.

And, as the branches of the trees afford not only a lodging-place, but also a breeding-place, for the birds, so the knowledge in our memory serve to multiply our thoughts, by affording opportunities for further thought.

Thus, amid all the discouraging circumstances of our struggling life, this parable beams upon us, like a ray of heavenly sunshine, teaching us, that vital truth, once taking deep root in our minds, and filled with the love of good, grows and flourishes, and branches out in the mind, till it becomes like a noble tree, full of vigorous and varied life.

Eminently should it be so, in the Lord's New-Church; because her doctrines are arranged in a rational system, all related and connected, branching out in all directions, from interior to exterior, from mind to matter, from heaven to earth. Her scientific, or facts of life, being numerous, and rationally seen, afford, to the mental birds of spiritual thought, both lodging-places and breeding-places.

Truly, in the New-Church, "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; even Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God." For, in the New-Church, every fact of our life should be a means of usefulness, and of spiritual life; for even the "leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." To the regenerate man, the truth of the Lord is a tree of life, in the midst of the heavenly garden of his mind. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Truths Prolific.

We obtain a very clear idea of the vitality of truth, when it is compared to a seed. The Lord said, "The seed is the Word." Seeds, though small, are very prolific. A very small seed may grow to be a very large tree. And this tree will produce more seeds, until the produce of one seed results in an orchard, or a forest. And seeds from these trees are carried elsewhere, and produce other orchards.

Such is every seed of truth in the Word of the Lord; it carries, within it, the vitality of heaven. It is wonderfully prolific. One truth, sincerely loved and practiced, becomes, like the seed, the beginning of a tree, and of a perpetual succession of trees. Such is the wisdom of the angels, from the truths of the Word, as mental seeds and trees, increasing in growth, and multiplying in number, through eternity. And as the angels grow wiser, they see that there is no limit to wisdom; and that they, themselves, are but in the outer court of wisdom, and that they can never attain the Divine Wisdom, which transcends all finite faculties. The truths of the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, are mental seeds of the greatest vitality; for they are laws of life, in the letter as well as in the spirit. They are adapted to all degrees and phases of human life. In each degree, the man has but to live by the Commandments, and he will find them to be most prolific of heavenly life. The Church. As it is with the truth, so is it with the Church; it begins as a small seed, and branches out into a great growth. To the gaze of the world, the homeless Jesus, teaching a strange doctrine in Jerusalem, and in the villages of Palestine, and then meeting an ignominious death, deserted by His mere handful of followers, seemed very unlikely to be doing a work of any importance. And yet Christianity is now the religion of the leading nations of the world. The disciples, themselves, had very little comprehension of the vitality of Christianity. So the New-Church began in small things. A learned and excellent man declared himself called to a spiritual mission; and he wrote numerous books of theology, in the Latin language. Over a hundred years have passed by, and yet the believers in these writings are not numerous. It is, with the New-Church, the day of small beginnings. But the truth, having the vitality of living seed, will yet extend its branches far and wide. The World. The world is not yet ready to adopt the truths of the New-Church. But, in the minds that are now ready, those truths will grow to be noble trees. For, since the last judgment, the conditions for growth are better, and the hindrances are fewer. The world still sees nothing beyond natural goodness. In fact, the world seeks to make everything, even religion, cater to the tastes of the world. But the New-Church reverses the idea, and makes the earth serve as the footstool to heaven. The world's purpose is pleasure; but the end sought by the New-Church is use, spiritual and natural.

Small Beginnings. The parable teaches us not to despise small beginnings. We cannot foresee all that will result from little things, either in good or in evil. It is the part of wisdom to encourage and develop all good, true and useful things, and to discourage all evil, false and injurious things. "For a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." The things which are in the angel, in fullness of life, were in him as a man on earth, as seeds. And these things are in the angel, now, as fruitful trees, because as a man, he encouraged the growth of the seeds, as beginnings of spiritual life. While they were men on earth, the angels did not have the fullness of spiritual life which they have now, in the spiritual world; but they never would have been angels, and never would have had their present experience, if they had not, while men on earth, done the work of repentance and reformation, by shunning evils, as sins. Any good work, begun, and sincerely maintained, will come to great results. And there is, to us, in this, a lesson on the negative side. We are often tempted to allow some of our evils to run on, because they are so small, and apparently unimportant. But this is a cunning suggestion of evil spirits. Good and evil are not so much questions of quantity, as of quality. Anything that we rationally see to be wrong, is important enough to be made a subject of self-denial. And, in doing this, we are to be careful to judge of the quality of a thing, not by the world's standard, but by the standard of the Lord's truth, as taught in His Word, and in His Church. The Law Of Growth. The seed grows to be a tree, not by chance, but by a law implanted in its own nature, by the Lord. The germ of the perfect tree is in the seed. Circumstances do not make the germ, but only afford it opportunities. So, we must have the germ of goodness, or love of the truth, or no circumstances can ever develop us into angels. We have no reason to expect to attain any spiritual good which we have not yet begun to live upon. But, having actually made an honest beginning in spiritual life, making a sincere effort to shun evils as sins, we have good reason to expect great results, as long as we practically maintain our principles.

We do not, in this world, find the full growth of regeneration. But the seeds must have begun to grow, here. And then, in the next world, we shall find these little seeds growing to be great trees, in our greater capacities. If we are shunning evils, we are growing in goodness, and our growth in goodness is exactly according to our growth out of evil. When the rich young man asked Jesus what good thing he should do, to inherit eternal life, the Lord replied, "Keep the commandments." The Certainty Of Growth.

Watch the little seed, as it grows. It has vitality in it. The whole force of the kingdom of heaven is in that little seed; in fact, the whole power of the Lord is within it, making it grow. Its destiny is determined; the law of its life is operating; and the result will come. All it needs is the opportunity to grow. So is it, in our minds, with the seed of truth. The Lord is in it. All the forces of the heavens are pressing into it. Only let us afford it the opportunity and the conditions, and the result is sure. And the conditions that it demands, are that we shun evils, as sins, and do good, in the love of the Lord and of the neighbor. In spiritual life, it is not so much matter what we come from, as what we come into. We are all naturally in evil; but we can grow out of evil, by repentance, reformation and regeneration.

Quantity And Quality.

"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked:" for even the beginnings of spiritual life are better than the fullness of sensuous life. "I would rather be a

door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” By the “little that a righteous man hath,” the Lord saves him. Therefore, if we look well to the quality of our life, our Lord will see to its quantity. For goodness is the ground in which wisdom grows.

08. The Leaven.

The Leaven.

(Matthew 13:33.) The Uses Of Subtle Temptations.

Trials.

Progress in spiritual life comes by means of temptations. Trials are the tests of character, by which the regenerating man is confirmed and strengthened in goodness and truth, and, at the same time, enabled to resist and put away the evil and false tendencies of his natural mind. The Kingdom Of Heaven.

“The kingdom of heaven” is the mental kingdom in which the Divine Love and Wisdom are the ruling principles in the minds and lives of men: it is an inward and spiritual kingdom. (For further explanation of the term “the kingdom of heaven,” see page 104.) But the truths of “the kingdom” do not grow uninterruptedly, even in sincere minds. Evil influences have many methods of attack.

Distinctions. The parable of “The Sower” displays the differences in human receptivity of Divine influences. There, the influence of evil is to keep men opposed, or indifferent, to truth, or in a merely superficial attachment to it. The parable of “The Tares” exhibits the work of evil influences, in sowing false ideas among the truths, in our minds. But the parable of “The Leaven” discloses a method of attack even more subtle, in which the cunning devils inject their false suggestions into the very things which we regard as good and true; thus, unconsciously to ourselves, contaminating the quality of our accepted truths. And the difficulty lies in our discovery of the contamination. “For, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” As our inward disposition to love, and to do, the truth, seeks to come out into our natural mind, to form our feelings and thoughts, and to control our actual conduct, our evil tendencies are aroused; and they contaminate our truth.

Illustration.

Take, for instance, our inclination to hasty temper. Inwardly, we may be trying to be regenerated. We may learn the truth and understand it. We may see that amiability is a Christian duty, and that hasty-tempered action is rude, selfish and sinful. But, when an occasion arises to try our temper, while we still know, theoretically, that a bad temper should not be indulged, yet the old inclination to be offended, and to retaliate, is secretly aroused, to pervert our idea of the truth, by giving it wrong applications. Then a combat arises between the inward principle of good and the natural selfishness of temper. This combat is a temptation, by spiritual fermentation, because our good is adulterated with evil tendencies, and our truth is perverted by false suggestions. For instance; we may be induced to think that we ought to retaliate, in the case before us, in order to show the wrong-doer his own condition. And while we think we are carrying out the truth, for the truth’s sake, we are actually indulging our own self-love.

Now, if, in the light of the Ten Commandments, we examine the quality of our feelings and thoughts, we shall see their contamination. And then, if we keep control over our tongues and our hands, and if we determine to do the Lord's will, the fire of His love will flow into our minds, and cast out the leaven of falsity. Then the evil and false things, which we have resisted, will be separated from us, more and more; and the quality of the good that we have loved and practiced, will be confirmed in us. The clearer truth will become more and more a practical principle in our life, as well as in our thought.

Thus, the fermentation, by causing a temptation, has resulted in good to us. It was induced by the promptings of evil spirits, who began it, in order to break down our growing love of truth and good. They aroused our natural tendencies, and thus allured us towards our destruction.

Temptations Permitted. The Lord permitted them to stir us up, because we could thus recognize our own evil tendencies, and the hells towards which they tend. But when the devils began alluring us, the Lord sent His guardian angels to us, to enable us to discover the contamination; and to keep us in our good affections and true thoughts; and to help us to bear the trial of our principles. The Lord permitted the devils to arouse us, because He could thus turn their work to our benefit. He allowed them to put leaven in our meal, because the result would be better bread. For we already possessed the truth, in whose light we could see the evil character of our tendencies. The Leaven.

Now, the operation of these temptations, in our minds, is like the operation of leaven, in bread-making. Naturally, the bread would be heavy, and it would contain impurities. But by leavening it, the leaven agitates and ferments the whole lump of dough, until the fire, which bakes the bread, drives out the leaven; and it also drives out all the impurities of the dough, which can be carried off with the leaven.

So, a man can not clear his mind of its tendencies to evil and falsity, without a combat between these things and his good and true principles. The quality of his good and truth must be regenerated. But, after the combat, if the truth conquers, false ideas will be cast out, as the leaven from the bread. The nature of leaven may be seen in the fact that it is the result of decay. And, therefore, it would represent spiritual decay, or death. The good that comes by means of leaven is not from the leaven, itself, but from the operation of the leaven, over-ruled by the Divine Providence, for good, and by means of fire. Leaven represents the false principles which come from evil.

Meal.

Wheat represents the vital good principles, in the mind, but which need to be brought into practical use. Grinding the wheat into meal, or flour, represents the mental process of preparing our good principles for actual use, by rationally examining them, thinking upon them, etc. Meal, or flour, thus represents truth derived from good; good put in shape to be applied. And in the application, further good will be effected, good in a more practical phase. But for actual use, the flour is to be made into bread. And bread, being partly man's own work, represents practical good, brought out in his daily life, in performing uses. But, before pure good can come from such truth as the man holds, that truth must be purged of whatever impurities it may contain, because of false notions in the man's mind. So, when the man begins to carry out his truth, he will find his natural and hereditary

evil tendencies aroused, to contaminate the truth. In the dough, the impurities are willing to join themselves to what is good, because then they can corrupt this good: but the pure things, and those longing for greater purity, do not desire to join themselves to the impurities. So a combat arises, till the impurities are cast out. So, in the mind, false things are willing to join themselves to truth, to taint its quality. But the truth, in a regenerating mind, is not willing to be corrupted. The Woman. The leaven, in the text, was used by a woman. The woman represents the affections; here, the natural affection, in an unregenerate state. She hides the leaven in the meal. Falses are insinuated into our minds, and hidden there, in our truths, by evil spirits. But they do this by means of our natural affection for things of self and the world. In the same way, in the allegory of Eden, the serpent used Eve to tempt Adam, the natural affection to reach the rational thought.

Measures. The meal was “three measures of meal.” Measures are vessels, for ascertaining quantities. All hollow vessels, to contain things, represent doctrines, which are hollow forms, or vessels, to hold truth.

Three.

Three, as a number, represents fullness, or completeness, as to truth. There are three discrete, or different, degrees of life, celestial, spiritual and natural. There are three divisions of man’s body, the head, the trunk, and the extremities, representing the three degrees of life. So, in the man, there are three parts, the spirit, the activity, and the body. In the Lord, there are three parts, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which are Love, Wisdom and Power, a trinity of principles, in one Divine Person, the Lord, Jesus Christ. As three means full, or complete, “three measures of meal” would mean a full system of doctrines of truth, truths so complete that we could live upon them. In the text, we are interested, not in the three measures, as vessels, but in their contents. Thus the text treats of the truths in the mind, in complete doctrinal system.

Using The Leaven. When the mind is thus properly instructed, and equipped for spiritual progress, and when it makes an effort to go forward to a new step in spiritual life, then the evil spirits, by means of our natural affection, the woman, insinuate into our thought some natural falsity, linked with some hereditary tendency to evil. Then the whole mind is stirred up, by this injected falsity. “The whole [lump] was leavened.” The truthfulness of the truth is practically brought in question, in the mind, and the love of truth is assailed, by the false principle injected, the leaven. The woman “took” the leaven, from some old decayed dough, from a previous leavening, which represents something left over, from the old, unregenerate nature, and now brought forward. So a combat arises, a fermentation, a temptation. If the truth conquers, the fire of love to the Lord drives out the leaven, and carries off, with it, the impurities by which it had a foothold in the mind; as the swine of the Gergesenes carried off the devils that entered into them. The Exact Meaning.

Thus, we see that the kingdom of heaven is not like the leaven, itself; but the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, in man’s mind, by means of temptations, is like the cleansing of the dough, and the making of good bread, by means of the leaven. Dry leaven will not operate upon dry flour; but it needs moisture.

Water represents natural truths. And natural truths, truths as seen by the natural mind, are often so erroneously understood, that, like water in the meal, they aid in the operation of leavening. The natural mind is not able to take clear and genuine truths, at once; but it has to receive, at first,

appearances of truth, which are not genuine; and these are used as means by which genuine truths are afterwards received by the mind; as, in fruits, the first and unripe juices are sour, and yet these sour juices are the means of introducing the sugar which sweetens the ripe juices.

Truth is theoretical and speculative, in our minds, until we are brought to test its quality and our adherence to it.

Illustrations.

See, for instance, how the rich young man, who went to the Lord, asking what he should do to inherit everlasting life, felt confident that he was willing to do whatever should be required of him. He expected to be called upon to do some great external act. But, as soon as he found that he was asked to practice self-denial, he declined to do the first thing suggested. It did not seem good, to him.

See, too, how self-confident Peter was, in his adherence to the Lord. "Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise, also, said all the disciples." And yet, within a few hours, Peter did deny the Lord, three times. And he, with the other disciples, forsook the Lord, and fled.

We are apt to imagine that we are as good as we know how to be. If we know the truth, we are apt to think that we shall always do it. But, "Let not him who girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off." For there is a combat at hand, and he cannot tell, till the fight is over, how he is coming out of it. He does not recognize the quality of his good and truth.

But, when we are actually tried and tested, and have acknowledged the contaminated quality of our good and truth, then the truth we have fought for, and lived for, we value as our life. It becomes a part of our life. And "all that a man hath will he give for his life;" not merely his outward existence, but especially his mental life, of affection and thought. So, as we uphold our good principles, and allow our Lord to regenerate their quality, against our tendencies to evil, we exalt our good principles, in our own esteem; we rise to higher and finer qualities of good and truth; because, more and more, we separate ourselves from our inclinations to evil. Then our good principles are no longer merely theoretical, but practical; and they are not merely natural, but also spiritual.

Theory And Practice.

Because we have placed a new truth in our memory, and in our understanding, and even in our natural affection, it does not follow that we have placed that truth in our life. That requires another step forward. We do not always make good bread, even when we have good flour. If we have merely taken the new truth into our thought, and are externally delighted with it; if it has never, as yet, cost us any struggle in our life; we may know that it is not yet as well-made bread, but as meal, only. And it must yet go through the process of leavening, that it may be purified, and made ready for spiritual food.

Many persons hold very loosely their good and true mental possessions. But, when a temptation comes, and they are stirred up, in a mental fermentation, their supposed principles are brought out sharply, before them, and they are made to define their quality. When a man comes into the New-Church, he has an enthusiastic delight in the new truths. He wonders why all persons do not at once receive these beautiful doctrines. But when he tries to carry out these doctrines, in his

daily life; and when he sees how hard his own evil and false inclinations try to hold their ground, and to justify themselves; and how hard they seek to contaminate the actual quality of the new truths; he will cease to wonder why the whole world does not rush into the New-Church. The complete system of truths in his understanding will be the “three measures of meal.” But this meal is not yet his bread of life. It will have to go through a tremendous fermentation before it can be made into “the bread of God, that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”

Leaven Represents Hell.

We notice the fact that, in the parable, leaven does not represent heaven, but hell. And yet, outside of the New Church, almost all the commentators on the Scriptures regard the leaven as representing heaven; and this, too, in the face of the acknowledged fact that, in all other texts, in the Scriptures, leaven denotes what is evil and false. The few of the old commentators who see that leaven represents hell, go to the other extreme, and interpret the parable to mean that heresies and evils, like leaven, will creep into the Christian Church, and corrupt the whole Church. The general idea of the commentators seems to be that leaven, as a symbol, is used in a general way, to represent an active but secret influence, working great results without assigning any definite character to the leaven. As to this parable, outside of the New-Church, the general interpretation is, that it represents the silent power of the Gospel of Christ, gradually transforming the world to its own character, or quality. But as we have already seen, this is an entire misconception of the meaning of leaven. Leaven does not, in the text, as it does not elsewhere in the Scriptures, represent anything good or true.

Though the leaven, itself, is vile, yet its operation is made to result beneficially. So, though false and evil things are vile, yet their permitted operation, during temptations, is, in the Divine Providence, over-ruled and turned to human good, in the regenerating man.

Therefore, the common habit of speaking of anything good as “leavening” evil things, is erroneous. Leavening does not mean purifying; it means tempting, and seeking to corrupt. It is evil that leavens, or, rather, falsity derived from evil. But the Lord purifies men’s minds, by thwarting the leaven, and turning its influence against itself. The Fire. No good comes from the leaven, itself; but from the fire, which compels the leaven to defeat itself, If you leave the dough, with the leaven in it, the dough will soon be ruined. The good comes from the fire, which drives out the leaven. Fire represents spiritual love.

And, in temptations, our spiritual love, filled with the fire of energy from heaven, so acts upon our mind, that it drives out the evil and false things insinuated and suggested by the tempting evil spirits, and also makes them carry away, with them, our hereditary evil and false tendencies. For these, being recognized and resisted, are rejected.

Now, if the leaven represented good and true things, then its action in leavening the dough, “till the whole was leavened,” would be all that was necessary. Yet, when the whole mass is leavened, it is utterly unfit for food. It must yet go through its most important process, by means of the fire. Therefore, the leaven, itself, does not improve the flour, nor does it make bread of the flour; it spoils the flour. And the more it goes through the whole lump, the more it spoils the flour. But the more we bake the leaven out of the flour, the better the bread. In these facts we can see that leaven cannot represent heaven, or the gospel of heaven. And the general belief that leaven does

represent the gospel, is one of the superficial fallacies of the Old Theology, which does not penetrate to the center of things.

Unleavened Bread. In some of the religious feasts of the Israelites, including the Passover, the people were commanded to use unleavened bread; and all leaven was strictly forbidden. Now, if leaven represented anything good, it would surely be what was especially needed at the Passover.

But, with leaven meaning evil and falsity, the explanation is easy. The earlier feasts of the Jewish year represented the earlier stages of regeneration, when men were in faith, rather than in love; not yet leavened, or tempted, and not yet purified. And so they were to use no leaven, in order to represent that they were in early states of reception of what the Lord was giving; but that they had not yet made these things their own, in practical life, through temptation and the resulting purification.

But, when they came to the feast of the "first fruits," they were commanded to use leavened bread. For mental harvest fruits are attained through something of labor and temptation; after a leavening process has been undergone. And so the leavened bread, being purified, represented the more advanced state of mind, in which their good had been somewhat tried, and purified in quality. The feast of the "first fruits" represented the entrance into the promised land; and this was after, and through, some leavening of temptation. The Flour As Good, Not Evil.

And, again, if leaven represents good, in the parable, then the flour must represent evil. And this would be against the whole tenor of the representative ceremonies in which flour was used, in the offerings to the Lord. Of course, there are impurities mixed with the flour, but the fine flour, itself, always represents truth derived from good. And, in the bread-making, the use of the leaven was to make the good flour even more pure.

Illustration.

Spiritual truth is obscured, and often forgotten, in the Old Theology, because the leaven of the false doctrines of "Vicarious Atonement" and "Justification by Faith Alone," has completely leavened the whole Theology, and has contaminated its quality; and in many cases, no fire of spiritual love has yet driven out that leaven, to purify, and make wholesome, the bread of life.

Salvation is not by faith alone, but by love, faith and obedience. Goodness is not imputed to men, but imparted to them, when they follow the Lord in actual life. The parable also affords a warning to the young, as well as to others, not to rush into temptations, before they are prepared to meet and overcome the evil influences. We must have the "three measures of meal," the full teachings of truth, in our minds, and the fire of a pure love in our hearts, or we shall not know the quality of our affections and thoughts; and the leaven will not be expelled, and we shall not have the pure bread of life.

We need not seek temptations; they will come, soon enough, and as soon as we are able to bear them. Let our prayer be, "Lead us, not into temptation," which we are not yet able to bear; but, when we are being tempted, "deliver us from the evil."

09. The Hidden Treasure.

The Hidden Treasure.

(Matthew 13:44.) The Discovery Of Spiritual Truth.

Summary.

Spiritual life is a heavenly joy to regenerate men. In the inwardly open soul, the pleasures of the senses sink to their proper place, as mere externals. The kingdom of heaven is the mental kingdom in which the Divine Truth rules the mind and life. The Literal Sense. A treasure is something known and esteemed as valuable. The literal sense of the parable refers to a custom that was common in ancient times, and in Oriental countries. In such countries, there were no banks, or other places to deposit money. A very small proportion of the wealth of the country could find any investment in trade. Robbers were numerous. Rulers were despotic, and on very slight pretext, ready to seize upon the wealth of the people. Wars might, at any time, change the rulers of the land, and unsettle the conditions of society. For these reasons, treasures were not safe, in the known possession of their owner.

Hence it became common to bury treasures in the earth, for safe keeping. And very often, from sudden death, or from political changes, and absence of the owner, his secret died with him; and his treasure remained hidden, until, in the course of events, the action of the elements, or the work of some laborer, exposed the hidden treasure. The Jewish law declared the treasure to be the property of the owner of the ground in which it was found.

These facts explain the literal sense of the parable. They show why the finder of the treasure had to purchase the field. For his sudden possession of unusual riches would have led to inquiry, and would have revealed the secret of his fortune. The Morality Of The Finder. The parable presents a representative picture of human life. The Lord does not mean to commend the methods of the finder of the treasure, nor to justify the hiding of the facts from the owner of the field, any more than He justified the shrewdness of the unjust steward, in another parable. We are not necessarily led to discuss the morality of these supposed acts; we are to take the lesson which the parable representatively teaches.

Spiritual Treasures. The treasure represents something valuable and desirable for spiritual life; it is spiritual truth, which, being practiced, leads to heavenly good. It is the wisdom of the Divine Word, known and appreciated. The Field. The field in which the treasure was hidden, is the Church, the Church in man, the teachings and principles of the Divine Word, in the Church; not the mere organization, or society. We may say that the field is the Church, or the Word, because the Word, in the Church, constitutes the Church; for it is the Lord's presence in the Church. In the parable, the field was seen to be valuable, when the hidden treasure was discovered in it. So is it with the Church, in our minds; it is precious to us, when we see what it contains; when we see the truths of heavenly life that have long been hidden from our sensuous gaze.

Those who do not see the truths of spiritual life in the principles of the Church, naturally regard the doctrines of the Church as a common field, of no especial value. The treasure of the Church is the Divine Truth of the Lord, especially in the internal, spiritual sense of the Scriptures. And the man who lives as a true member of the New Church, will see and appreciate the spiritual truths of the Lord's Word. And so fully will he rejoice in these truths, that he will sell all that he mentally has, all his own notions of the senses, in order to enter into the life of these interior truths, and thus into full possession of them. The Treasure Hidden. In the Church, the treasure is hidden in the field, because the spiritual and interior truth is hidden in the letter of the Scriptures, under all the literal history, prophecy, Psalm and Gospel. Parables and symbols are given, in which the spirit of truth lies hidden, to protect it from profanation. In the Scriptures, there is, throughout, from Genesis to Revelation, one grandest of themes, hidden under the various teachings of the letter; and this theme is the kingdom of heaven and its Divine King. All things in the whole Scriptures, in the supreme sense, teach of the Lord, Jesus Christ, in His Divine Humanity, the one, only God, in one Divine Person; and of His spiritual kingdom, set up in the hearts and lives of regenerate men. The kingdom of heaven is, indeed, "a treasure hid in a field;" it is spiritual truth and life, hid in the field of the Church, in the letter of the Scriptures. And a man finds this hidden treasure when he sees the spiritual sense of the Lord's Word, shining as the light, exposed to his view in the literal sense of the Bible. He sees that this inward and spiritual sense of the Scripture opens to him the door of the kingdom of heaven, and displays what is within the heavens.

Hiding The Treasure, Again. When the finder discovered the treasure, he hid it, again, until he should buy the field in which he found it. And there is a sense in which the finder of spiritual treasure hides it, until he can make it his own. The literal finder is in danger of loss by others learning his secret, and plotting against him. And so the finder of spiritual treasure is in danger of counter-plots.

He made this discovery, in his clearer and higher states of thought, when he was more than usually open to Divine influences. But, in the practical walk of life, he will have to return to his external states and works. And there is danger that his natural and sensuous mind will seek to prevent him from coming into full possession of his newly-found treasure. For the discovery of new truth always leads the sincere man to review his life, in the new light. But his natural and sensuous mind does not feel willing to be criticized and set in order. And so every new truth introduced into the mind, finds opposition on the part of the old ways of feeling, thinking, and doing. Thus the man who finds the treasure of spiritual truth, in the revealed spiritual sense of the Scriptures, does not submit it to the opposition and the jeers of his sensuous thought; he does not let it lie in the open field, to be carried off by the first passer-by.

He hides the new treasure in his interior mind, in the profound depths of his mind, where it will be safe from the mental dogs and swine, and thieves, that roam through the Unregenerate natural mind. He sees that "the kingdom of heaven is within" him, and that he must store up the great treasure in his inward spirit, until he can fully possess it as his own. Then, in gratitude to the Lord, he exclaims, "Thy Word have I hid, in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

He first secures the treasure of spiritual truth in his inward mind, in his heart, so that he may thence bring it out into action, in his external life. For he is to come into full possession of his treasure, only by overcoming the evil tendencies of his natural mind; by selling, or parting with, all

that he has of his own selfish life, and buying, or procuring, what the Lord has to give him.

Rejoicing. When the man finds the treasure, he rejoices. Joy is the delight which comes from his love of the truth. His inward affection for good and truth is aroused, on account of what he has found in the Word of the Lord, and in the teachings of the Church, from the Word. He gives up all his former possessions, his old feelings and thoughts, that he may secure the greatest treasure. He denies himself, and follows the Lord. He heeds the words of the Lord, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Then he goes his way, to buy the field.

Going.

So, the finder of spiritual truth must "go" to buy the field, the principles of the Church, and the letter of the Word. He must go, because going, or making progress, or walking, means living, or doing according to the truth. The man must "go" the way of the Lord's commandments; for they are the way of life. When we see the great value of spiritual truth, our appreciation of that value does not make the treasure ours. We must go to the owner of the field, and acknowledge his ownership, and buy the field at his price. The Owner. The owner is the Lord, for all truth is His. The letter of the Word is His. And, when we see the spiritual truths of the Word, we must acknowledge them to be the Lord's. If we regard them as our own, by discovery, through our own intelligence, we steal them from the rightful owner. But, as we see the treasure in the field, the spiritual truth lying within the literal truths of the Word of God, we must acknowledge the Lord's ownership of the truth. And when we acknowledge the Word to be the Lord's, we thereby acknowledge all things in the Word to be His.

Buying The Field.

If we buy the field, we shall have the treasure; not by any secret trickery, but by open right; for, to buy the field, or the truth of the letter, is to acknowledge it as the Lord's, and to make it ours by practice, by living according to it. And when we do our part of the work of regeneration, by living according to the Lord's truth, by keeping His commandments, we do all that we can do; and the Lord then gives us the heavenly treasure of the spiritual truth, to which our good life has opened us. As Jesus said, "He that is washed, hath no need, save to wash his feet;" i.e., to keep his external life clean and pure, according to the commandments; and then his internal life will find a suitable external in his daily conduct.

Thus, in the spiritual meaning of this parable, the finder did not conceal anything from the owner. He bought all that he could buy. And the proof of his readiness to do his part was seen in the fact that he "sold all that he had."

Selling All. To sell all that he had, was to give up all his self-love, his self-intelligence, and his self-righteousness, that he might come into possession of heavenly love, spiritual intelligence, and heavenly righteousness. He changed the object of his affections from himself to the Lord. He sold away his evils, by self-denial, in resisting evil inclinations. He bought good, by making it his own, by practice.

We cannot make the Lord's treasures to be ours, except at the expense of giving up our selfish life, in exchange for them. When we accept our Lord's will as our will, and live as He commands

us to live, He can fill us with His spiritual blessings.

But, if we know these treasures to be in the Lord's Word, but do not use the truth to live upon, we are as a man who knows where treasure is hidden, but who does not own the field, and cannot possess the treasure.

What Must Be Sold.

It is not necessary for a man to give up his natural wealth, either in physical or mental riches; but it is necessary for him to give up holding them as his own, selfishly, and to learn to use them as the Lord's. And a man comes into full possession of spiritual treasure, just in proportion as he sells all that he has, or completely takes up his cross, and denies himself if he secretly tries to keep something of his selfishness, the purchase will fall through. We cannot economize in Journeying to heaven. Only as we put away the evil life of hell can the pure life of heaven flow in, to bless us. We shall procure all of heaven that we spiritually pay for, and no more. We cannot make a shrewd bargain with the Lord. The more unreservedly we receive heaven, the more fully it will come to us.

Those who freely acknowledge the Lord, see the interior truths of the Word; and then they give up all their unregenerate self-hood, that they may be regenerated. And the more their regeneration progresses, the more clearly they will see the interior truths of the Word, which seem obscure to the natural mind. And as we put away evils, we come into the joy of such good as is opposite to the evils which we shun. And as we resolutely put away an evil, as a sin, the more clearly we see the sinfulness of our evil. As we see glimpses of the beauty of holiness, the glory of the regenerate life, we must put down our anger, malice, envy, deceit, meanness, and all other forms of self-love; and then we shall own the treasure of spiritual truth, in the love, the patience, the amiability, the consideration for others, the desire for spirituality of character, and all other virtues, into which we live ourselves. The Spiritual Blood Of The Lord. As New-Churchmen, we clearly understand that we cannot buy heaven by the physical blood of the Lord, shed upon Calvary. The doctrine of the "Vicarious Atonement" is one of the ideas based on external and sensuous views of the letter of the Scriptures. And when we see the cloud of the letter open, and the flood of light come forth from the inward and spiritual sense, we find a priceless treasure, hidden in the field of the letter.

And, for joy, we go and sell, or put away, all our old ideas of a "Vicarious Atonement," that we may enter fully into the grand and glorious truths, that God is infinite Love; that men condemn themselves, by forsaking the Lord; and that the Lord saves all who can be saved; i.e., who are willing to return to Him, by loving Him above all things, and loving their neighbors as themselves; and by living according to His commandments. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." The blood of the Lord, spiritually means the Divine Truth of the Lord, which saves us from evil, as we love it, and learn it, and do it.

Regeneration Gradual. And we cannot instantly buy the field of the Church, or of the Word. We buy it gradually: we pay for it in installments. Every evil feeling rejected from our life, makes a payment towards possession of our treasure. For as we sell out, or put away, our evils, we enter into good. But it does not follow, because a man cannot instantly pay in full for the treasure, that he must wait until he becomes fully good, before he can begin to take possession of the spiritual life of the Church. The external organization of the Church is for the purpose of aiding men to learn what they need to know of spiritual things, and to live as they ought to live. And yet we must not

imagine that the act of uniting with the church organizations will do the work of regeneration.

We know where the truth is; we have come upon the hidden treasure; but it is not yet ours. We must buy the field; we must make the letter of the Word ours, by making the truth our rule of daily life; i.e., by giving up all things in ourselves that are opposed to the truth; and by keeping the commandments. This we do, by shunning evil, and doing good, in the Lord's name, paying a little every day, as the day brings us opportunity. And "he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Resisting Evils.

Evils are clannish; they cling together. But, as we truly loosen our affections from any one evil, we loosen them from all evils; for we put away our disposition to cherish evil.

And, as we do this, we are, to the same extent, lifted out of, and above, the influence of all evils. All evils are forms of self-love. And, if we truly resist any evil, we resist our self-love, which is the root of all evils. And so if we sincerely shun evil in any form, we shall be willing to resist it in any other known form. The State Of Christendom. In the present state of Christendom, the internal, spiritual sense of the Lord's Word is a hidden treasure. Few know of its existence; and few would appreciate it as a treasure, if they should see it in the doctrines of the New-Church.

See how the majority of men, even in the churches, regard the Old Testament, as a book "outdated, like last year's almanac," and of no practical use to the present age. And how are men to find the inward treasure of the Lord's Word? It does not lie on the surface, where every careless passer-by may see it.

Cultivating The Field. The Greek word for field, in the parable, means a cultivated field. The man who found the hidden treasure was working in the field, doing some manual labor, for the owner of the field.

And, spiritually, it is when we are at work, in the Church truths, in the letter of the Word, seeking to do some good, to perform some use with the literal truth, that the truth opens to us, and displays its inward contents, its spiritual treasure. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." In the parable, the man was not knowingly seeking the hidden treasure; but he was doing useful work, for proper compensation. And the treasure that came to him was greater than he expected. So is it in our life; if we do our outward duties patiently, and in the love of being useful, we shall come upon greater treasures than we expected. And we shall find joy in the treasure. And it will enrich us: and it will change the character of our subsequent life.

Putting Away Evils.

Few of us know how much we have, in our natural minds, that we ought to sell out, or put away. Because we do not break out into grievous forms of sin, we may forget that the disposition to sin is in us, and perhaps only checked by some form of policy, or of fear. The first point is to know evils to be evils. Then we need to know them to be our evils. Then we need to resolve to put them away, as sins against God. Then we must resist them, whenever they come up, and give us wrong inclinations. And then we must do the good which is opposite to the evil that we were inclined to do.

Only thus do we buy the field with the hidden treasure. Thus, we make the spiritual sense of the Lord's Word our own, in the measure in which we make the literal commandments our own, by practice. The true way to regard our riches, is to ask, not What have I, in possessions? but What am I, in actual character, judged by the standard of the Lord's commandments?

Knowledge Is Power. The parable emphasizes the importance of knowledge. "Knowledge is power," both physically and spiritually. The treasures of spiritual and heavenly life are all about us; and yet how little we know of their existence. For centuries, the gold fields of California and Australia were trodden by men who knew nothing of the vast amounts of treasure hidden under their feet. How often, mentally, we heedlessly tramp over the things which contain spiritual wealth, utterly unconscious of the possibilities about us. How often men may have died in poverty, lying upon ground containing wealth enough to ensure them immense fortunes. Farmers in Pennsylvania may have lost, under unpaid mortgages, farms which contained oil enough to make millionaires of their owners.

So, indeed, we die of spiritual poverty, even on the very ground in which our bountiful Lord has stored the treasures of eternal life. Sometimes, like the farmers of Pennsylvania, we have seen something of the oil, but have not known its value. The teachings of the Bible, and of the Church, are familiar to us, and yet we are blind to the treasures which dwell within them, ready for him who has eyes to see. The Coming Of The Lord. The Lord, Himself, came before men, in the incarnation. The treasures of the Divine character were in Him; and yet men knew Him not. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

And, to-day, the revelation of the inward, spiritual sense of the Divine Word, in which the Divine character of the Lord, Jesus Christ, is plainly demonstrated, constitutes the Second Coming of Christ; for this coming is not to be an outward, bodily coming, in the physical "clouds," but an inward, spiritual coming, in the "clouds" of the literal sense of the Word, which are parted before the eyes of spiritual-minded men, that they may see the greater glory of the inward and spiritual sense, in which the Lord, Jesus Christ, is plainly manifested, as the one God, in one Person, coming to the minds and lives of regenerate men. The Divine character is hidden in Jesus Christ; hidden to the world, but known to those who love Him. "Truly, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior." And, to-day, even in His Church, we are talking about Him, and reading His teachings, but seeing not a millionth part of the treasure that lies hid in His holy Word. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me." "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places."

10. The Merchant Seeking Pearls.

The Merchant Seeking Pearls.

(Matthew 13:45-46.) Acknowledging The Divine Humanity. The Central Truth. The most important of all knowledge is that concerning God. The grandest theme of all the Divine Word, the most precious pearl of Christianity, is the truth of the Divine character of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the central and pervading topic of the Sacred Scriptures, dwelling as an inward meaning, within all the various teachings of the Bible. And this is the especial lesson of the parable before us. The parable of "The Hidden Treasure" suggests that the Church is in possession of a great treasure, hidden from the careless world; the inward spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, hidden from the merely natural thought, but revealed to the spiritual mind. And now the present parable displays the fact that there is one greatest central truth of the Lord's Word; viz., the truth of the Divinity of the Humanity of Jesus Christ. The Divine Humanity.

We use the term with exactness, "the Divinity of the Humanity of Jesus Christ." For many persons admit something Divine in the character of Jesus, especially in His inward life. But few grasp the full idea of the entire deity of Jesus Christ. The Old Theology, burdened with the irrational "mystery of the trinity," has nothing to teach, as to the Divine character of the Lord, Jesus Christ, except the general fact, coupled with incomprehensible dogmas. But it is the mission of the New-Church to fulfill the Lord's own promise, "The time cometh, when I shall show you plainly of the Father." And, in the New-Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, has shown us plainly of the Father, by showing us His own identity with the Father, in one Divine Person. He has shown us the Divine character of His own Humanity; not the mere physical body; (for the mere material body is not an essential part of the humanity of any man;) but the assumed natural manhood of Jesus Christ, (all that is beyond the merely material part) glorified, and united with the indwelling Father, and thus made one, in the one Person of the one God, Jesus Christ. "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." This grand truth of the Divinity of the Humanity of Jesus Christ, is the "stone which the builders [have] rejected" from many of the Churches, but which, in the New-Jerusalem, "has become the head of the corner," the grand cornerstone of the holy city.

Selling All That He Hath. When this great truth dawns upon a man who is seeking spiritual truth, it throws a flood of heavenly light upon all things of man's two-fold life. In its glorious light, all things that the man has known before, and has held as truth, are tested. And whatever, among his feelings, thoughts and habits, he finds to be inconsistent with the great central truth of Christianity, he gladly gives up. Spiritually, he sells them all, to possess the greatest pearl, He gladly rises above old, and now outgrown, views, as he makes a genuine effort to live as Jesus lived, to fulfill the whole truth, and to outgrow his old and selfish ways of life. The Merchant. A merchant is one who buys and sells, in trade. And one who buys and sells useful articles represents one who procures knowledge of truth and good, that he may acquire intelligence and wisdom, and that he may communicate these to others. He is one who learns and teaches truths, for the sake of good. Trading represents making use of our mental riches. In the parable of "The Talents," those who

used their talents, or traded with them, increased their fortune, and were commended, while he who kept his talent without use, lost it, and was censured.

Spiritually, merchants are those who collect truths from the Lord's Word, for use. And, in communicating knowledge for use, they are rewarded by the spiritual compensation of increase in knowledge and intelligence, and in affection for good and truth. "Happy is the man who findeth wisdom, and the man who draweth out understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

Seeking. The merchant was "seeking goodly pearls." Seeking is an effort of the will, from the love of truth, for the sake of truth. We are commanded, "Seek ye the Lord," and to seek heaven, etc.; because we should make an effort of our will to attain spiritual life, in union with the, Lord. "Blessed are they that keep His testimonies; that seek Him with the whole heart."

One who is seeking regeneration, and in whose mind the kingdom of heaven is forming, is seeking knowledge and truths, that he may live by them. He spiritually seeks goodly pearls, that he may mentally trade with them.

Pearls.

"Pearls" represent knowledge of truth and good, or in the abstract sense truths, themselves.

Pearls are knowledge of an external degree, such as are in the letter of the Word. But by correspondence, these truths make one with the inward sense of the Word, its spiritual meaning. So, in advanced states of regeneration, pearls are not only knowledge, but also truths; for then we know and understand the truth. Whether a known doctrine is mere knowledge, or truth, or wisdom, in our minds, depends on the state of our regeneration. As pearls represent external truths, therefore it is said that, in the holy city, the gates are of pearl. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl." For gates are external truths, which serve as an introduction to what lies beyond, or within. The gates of the holy city are the external truths which introduce the mind into the knowledge of the system of spiritual truth. Every gate was of one pearl, to show the unity of truth. For the Lord is one; and every truth is, in its best sense, an introduction to some further knowledge of the Lord. And our knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord draw together, and conjoin into one, all the knowledge of truth and good which are derived from the Divine Word. All knowledge is, in its essence, knowledge of the Lord. Theology is knowledge of God.

Illustration. As the parts of the human body are various and distinct, and yet all connected in one body, and all united in their active co-operation, for the common good of the body; so, in the mind, all truths are parts of a general system of thought; and all are related and connected in their co-operation, in uses. As the body acts as one, moved by the indwelling spirit, so all truths are as one body, acting as one, under the Divine Spirit, which is their soul and life. The Lord In All.

Only as we see the Lord, in any knowledge, does that knowledge become of any spiritual use to us. "I am the Door," said the Lord, "by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." The very same knowledge, or doctrine, if separated from the Lord, will not enable the man to enter into spiritual life, nor to be saved from the spiritually deadening influence of his own evils. Hence, we see the great importance of an acknowledgment of the Lord, and the great danger of infidelity towards

God. The trouble with the merely moral man, is that he attempts to do good for his own sake, while the spiritual man does good for the sake of the Lord. As a man seeks knowledge, and uses it, in living by the truth, he acquires good. And, in earnestly seeking, he finds what he seeks; and more, also. He finds pearls, in great numbers; but he also finds one great pearl of immense value, which is worth more than all he before possessed. Seeking knowledge, he attains truth; and seeking the truth, he attains goodness. He finds the good towards which all truths point, the good of regenerate union with the Lord.

While Martha was seeking many things, and full of trouble about them, she was told by the Lord, that Mary had chosen the one thing needful, in seeking to draw nearer to the Lord, in heart and in life. The Unity Of God.

Only as we see the unity of God, can we comprehend the unity of truth. In the old mythology, there were various gods, often opposed to each other. And so, in the mind of the natural man, who sees not the unity of God, most of the truths seem to be separate, different, and often in conflict, not harmonizing under any grand central truth, and not co-operating in any united purpose, Only as we see the unity of God, in the Lord, Jesus Christ, can we comprehend Christianity, in the fullness of its spirit and scope.

But, as we learn to comprehend the fullness of the Divine character in the glorified Humanity of Jesus Christ, the one grand central truth of spiritual life arises, like a king, and draws together, systematizes, and unitizes, all the truths that we know, on all the planes, and in all the degrees, of our varied human life. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And He said, also, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me." The Growth Of The Truth. A pearl is formed gradually, layer upon layer. It is not a simple ball, but a series of coverings, over a small core. So, the knowledge of the Lord gradually forms in our minds, from a small beginning, "line upon line," until the grand truth is complete, as a finished pearl. The mind that is seeking goodly pearls, is looking for important knowledge and truths; and when prepared, by gradual growth, it finds the priceless pearl of the knowledge of the real character of the Lord, Jesus Christ, as the one Person of God. But knowing the genuine truth, does not mean knowing it merely in theory, as a doctrine, but knowing it practically; knowing it so that we keep it in mind, and act from it, as a living principle. Knowing the truth thus, we see the Lord in all truth. As the Lord is the incarnate Word, and as the written Word is the Divine Truth, so we see all good and truth to be in the Lord, and of the Lord; and we see all truth to be in the Lord's Word, and from the Word. Especially are these things seen and known in and from the inward, spiritual sense of the Word, in which the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ is clearly shown. The Relative Importance Of Truths.

We may hold this great truth, and yet we may not have noticed that it is the most valuable of all truths that we have. Our minds may not have been directed to the real quality of this one great pearl. For it is, with knowledge, as with pearls; their value depends not on their quantity alone, but also upon their quality. The largest is not always the most valuable. In the beginning of our Christian knowledge and experience, the doctrine of the Lord may not seem to be of very great importance. It may be one of the doctrines we know, and which we suppose we believe; but it may not seem to be the most important. It may seem to be more important to have the practical doctrines, which regulate our daily life. But as we love the truth, and see the Lord in it, and go on

selling all that we have, in order to make the truth our own, we see, more and more, that the Lord is in all truths; and that all knowledge point to the Lord, as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” that every truth in the Lord’s Word, however it may seem to refer to outward things only, still teaches, in its inward sense, something concerning the Lord, while it shows us how to make our manhood more like His, the full “measure of a man, that is, of an angel.”

Illustration. In the Mosaic account of creation, the light is said to have been created some days before the sun was created. But Genesis, as the Word of the Lord, treats not of geology and the making of the physical world; but, in the language of symbols, it treats of theology, and of the making of the mental world of the human spirit.

Light was distinguished, before the sun was seen, to represent the fact that general truths are seen, by the growing mind, before the Lord, the Divine Sun, is seen, and recognized, individually, as the Source of all truth, or mental light.

Suppose a little child should be shown the light, without being shown the sun, and without knowing the connection between the light and the sun. He might see the sunlight, the moonlight, the firelight, etc.; and he would regard them as derived from several different origins. But, show him the sun, and teach him the origin of light in and from the sun, and he will understand the connection. Then, gradually, as he becomes more and more intelligent, he will, from instruction, understand that all light originates in and from the sun, whether it be direct light, or reflected, or refracted, or light now brought out of the heat that was long ago stored in the coal, the coal-oil, etc., by the sun.

So, the spiritually intelligent mind, thoroughly instructed in the truth of the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ, understands the Lord as the one Source of all life and light. He sees that every truth is the Lord’s, and that it is filled with His life. He will never fail to ascribe all truth to the Lord, Jesus Christ. He will walk in the way of the Lord’s commandments. He will go to work, in earnest, to free himself of such things as prevent his spiritual progress.

Repeated Selling. In the parable of “The Hidden Treasure,” the man went and sold all that he had, and purchased the field. And now, in the next parable of the series, the finder of the pearl must sell all that he has. And yet these parables represent progressive and successive states of the same mind.

But, it may be asked, if the man has sold all he had, how can he sell any more? The first case refers more especially to giving up the love of the world; and the second refers to giving up the love of self. Each advance in character brings another advance in mental light. And then the man sees more things, in himself, that he needs to give up. In each stage of progress, he sells, or gives up, all that he then sees, in himself, of evil and falsity.

Pearls Before Swine. Our Lord warns us, “neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” These swine are our own sensuous lusts of evil. Our Lord cannot lift us up into heavenly life, by means of heavenly truths, if our affections grovel in the filth of a corrupt nature. It is one thing to know the truth, theoretically, and another thing to live by it. Even profane Babylon, corrupt and worldly, is, in the Scriptures, represented by a woman arrayed “in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.” She knows the truth, and professes holiness in outward things, but profanes all good and truth, by inward corruption. The Joy Of Knowing Truth.

Both this parable and that of “The Hidden Treasure,” show us that the knowledge of spiritual truth brings with it many joys. “The secret of the Lord is with those that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.” And the higher the truth, the higher the joy. The Divine Word is inexhaustible; we can never outgrow its truths; but we can grow more and more intelligent in seeing and understanding what is in the Divine Word. The Word is Divine Truth, in all degrees, and adapted to all degrees and planes of human thought and life. All our new light is from the Lord’s Word; and all our new truth is only new knowledge of what is in the Divine Word. All the pearls of knowledge are but gates to the holy city of the New-Jerusalem, the mental city of our Lord. “Every several gate is of one pearl.”

11. The Draw-Net.

The Draw-Net.

(Matthew 13:47-50.) The Separation Of The Good And The Evil. The Judgment. The teachings of the Church prepare men for judgment, The Divine Truth, operating upon the characters of men, separates the evil from the good, by the development of opposite qualities. For spiritual separation is a matter of state, or character, rather than of place. Men who develop into opposite characters, spiritually separate. They grow apart. Physically they may be located very near to each other, but, mentally, they dwell in different worlds. In the spiritual world, distance is determined by character; those are near each other, who are nearly alike in character: and those are distant from each other, who are dissimilar in character. And it is so, mentally, even in this world; for we say of one who is of our own kind, "he is near and dear to us," and of one who is dissimilar, and who does not love us, "he is distant."

Heaven is not merely a place, into which men may be admitted by Divine favor, The man who is admitted into the kingdom of heaven is the man who admits the heavenly principles of good and truth into his heart, into his understanding, and into his conduct; and who thus becomes a living embodiment of heavenly principles.

Water.

"Water" represents, and corresponds to, natural truth; that is, truth on the natural plane of thought, external truth; such, for instance, as is in the literal sense of the Divine Word, especially of the Ten Commandments. The Sea. The "sea," as the aggregate collection of waters, represents the letter of the Lord's Word, as the reservoir of natural truths.

And, as these truths are stored in the memory of a man, so, in one sense, the sea often represents man's natural memory, filled with the waters of truth.

Fishing.

"Fishes" represent the living principles that are in the doctrines of truth, in man's memory.

Personally, the fish are those persons who have knowledge of good and truth, and who receive truths on the natural plane, as information, or science. Such men may be either good natural men, or evil natural men. In this world, instruction is given to all men, as the wheat is sown broadcast over all the field.

Fishing represents instructing and converting men who are in external and natural states of mind and life. And fishermen are those who draw truths from the letter of the Word, and teach them to others. Therefore the Lord chose fishermen for His first disciples, because their occupation represented the new occupation to which He called them. And, in calling them, He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." The disciples, like the prophets, represented the principles which they taught. The fish is a low form of life, cold-blooded, and not intelligent. So,

men who are spiritually called fishes, men in natural-minded states, are not, spiritually, in a high or intelligent condition. But they may be instructed, and drawn out of their present condition, and into higher states of thought, and into knowledge of more exalted doctrines, as the fish are drawn up, out of the water, and into the vessel, or upon the shore. The Net. The “net,” as a system of cords, put together in an orderly way, for the purpose of catching fish, represents a system of doctrines, in orderly, logical arrangement, which will capture men’s minds, and hold them fast in the conclusion of the argument. The net, like almost all other representatives, may be used in either a good or a bad sense. In a bad sense, a net represents a connected system of false doctrines. But, in a good sense, the net is a system of true doctrines, confirmed by the Divine Word.

“Casting the net into the sea,” represents gathering natural-minded men, to be instructed, and teaching them the truths of the letter of the Word, rationally opened and explained. Gathering “of every kind,” represents instructing all men, men of all sorts. For we cannot tell, until we see what men are, in character, whether they will receive instruction and become spiritual-minded.

Drawing The Net. When the net was full, the fishermen drew it to the shore. The net being full, represents an abundance of knowledge of truth, in the understanding of the men who are instructed; for then the men have sufficient knowledge to be able to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsity, and sin from holiness. And, having sufficient knowledge, they can live by the truth, if they are disposed to do so. As “water” corresponds to natural truth, so the “shore,” the land, corresponds to natural good, which is the result of living by the truth. It is the practical application of the truth to the things of life. When men are taught to know the truth, the next step is to get good from the truth, by practicing it. All instruction is given for the sake of its use, in making men better in character. And so when men are properly instructed, they become responsible for the practice of the truth that they know. The Practical Judgment. And thus their life becomes a practical judgment to them. Every man is judged by the use that he makes of his instruction. For the purpose of instruction is that men may live good lives.

Every judgment comes in a full state, a state of ripeness, a prepared condition, when the man’s disposition and life are fixed and confirmed, either in good or in evil. In the history of the general Church on earth, every era, or dispensation, has been followed by a general judgment upon the men of that dispensation. In the parable of “The Tares,” the tares and the wheat grew together “until the harvest,” which was said to be at “the end of the world;” i.e., at the end of that age, or dispensation, or that general condition of the world. The final judgment, as it results in fully developing and confirming every man in his chosen character, necessarily results in permanently separating men who have been outwardly together, but who have been gradually growing more and more dissimilar in character. Thus every general judgment is a separation of the good and the evil.

And, individually, in each man’s mind, his judgment is the permanent separation of what is good from what is evil, in his mental life. For we approach our judgment as we approach a fixed state of character. And as our character becomes fixed, we confirm the principles which we love, and in which we live; and we reject the principles which we no longer hold in esteem. Thus, practically, a man judges himself, by his own life. He judges himself to remain what he has made himself to be. “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” He confirms, secures and retains, in his character, the principles which he has made his own, by living

upon them. He calls them good, and carefully keeps them for use. But he casts away, as bad and useless, whatever principles he no longer loves and cherishes. Like the fishermen, he draws his full net to shore; and there he sits down, and sorts the fishes he has caught. He gathers the good into his mental vessels, but casts away the bad.

Sitting.

“Sitting,” as a position more fixed and permanent than standing, or walking, represents a more fixed state of the will, or heart; a state in which the man is prepared promptly to decide as to what shall enter into his life. In the determination of his will, he spiritually sits down, to judge of the things which come to him, as supposed principles of life. His desires being fixed, he now knows what he wants, and what he does not want; what is useful, and what is useless, what is good, and what is bad, to him.

Vessels.

“Vessels,” as hollow forms, to hold something, represent doctrines, which contain truths. But the “net” was the argumentative doctrine, by which he gathered the principles of life; and now the vessels into which he puts the good fish, are the interior, spiritual doctrines of the inward thought. He puts these living principles into A the doctrines which are necessary for his mental life. He fills every doctrine with a living principle; i.e., he makes it no longer merely a doctrine, but he accepts it as a principle of daily life. The Separation,

Thus, in his mind, a judgment is executed. Good and evil things, and true and false things, are separated. And the good things in his affections are joined with their corresponding truths in his thoughts; and evil things are cast out.

And, as regards a general judgment, the same truths apply. The evil persons are separated from the good, when the good pass into the heavens, for which they are fitted, and when the evil pass into their appropriate hells; each going where his chosen and confirmed character takes him.

Natural-minded men may be either good or evil. The test of their character is whether they keep the Lord’s commandments; whether they follow their own natural desires, and live selfishly, or hold themselves under obligation to obey the Divine law, and thus resist their selfish inclinations, and practice self-denial, for the sake of good principles. The End Of World.

“So shall it be, at the end of the world,” or the end of the age, or the dispensation, in the general Church.

Or, individually, so shall it be at the end of each stage of the man’s progress. “The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.” Angels draw near, and seek to help, all men; but while their sphere is attractive to good men, it is repulsive to evil men; for evil men cannot bear the presence of an angel.

Angels. An angel is a regenerated man, who has lived on earth, and has passed into heaven. In an abstract sense, the angels who execute the judgment of good and evil in the individual man, are the good and true principles of the Lord’s Word, the spiritual principles which we have loved and adopted, and which now judge of the quality, or character, of a the things that are in our natural minds.

These angels “come forth,” out of the Divine Word, and from the Lord, “and sever the wicked from among the just;” i.e., they draw the line between the things of regenerate life and the things of evil and worldly life; they lead us fully to accept the good and to reject the evil.

Or, if the man has confirmed himself in evil, then the interior truths of the Divine Word, when they throw their searching light upon the man’s mind, separate the evil from among the good, in another sense; i.e., they compel the man to define his position and character.

If he has hypocritically proclaimed his attachment to what the Church calls good and true, he will, in the nearer presence and sphere of the interior truth, feel such repugnance to the truth, that he will break away even from the outward appearance of believing in the truth; as the rising sun, with its genial beams of heat and light, awakes to life the birds of day, and, at the same time, drives back into their congenial darkness, the dismal birds of night. The evil man will keep for himself the evil that he loves, and reject the truth and the good that he does not love.

Illustration. For instance, a young man is employed in a store. He has been brought up to regard honesty as an essential element of true manhood. And, in his usual outward thought, he esteems honesty; and he thinks himself to be honest. He expects to remain honest, all his life. But, as yet, he knows very little of his own actual condition of mind.

Gradually, he develops a love of sensuous pleasures. He associates with other young men, who have acquired fast habits. He loves to be well regarded by his associates, and to have a name of being generous and liberal. Perhaps he also develops a love of display. He spends money freely, as, long as he has the means.

Now, his love of pleasure, and his love of reputation among his associates, grow stronger and stronger. He thinks he must have more money. Now his selfish loves, or lusts, begin secretly to oppose his early esteem for honesty. Honesty, with him, is only a sentiment, not yet confirmed as a principle of life. In the eagerness of his desire for pleasure, and for reputation, he considers what he is to do.

He starts out with the increasing desire to feed his natural tastes, and to keep up the habits which cater to his sensuous desires. He has adopted a certain system of outward thought and doctrine, as to what is allowable and necessary to his life. This doctrine is his fishing-net. With it, he boldly rows out into the sea of his memory, which is filled with the teachings of his parents and of the Church, and the things learned from the world. He turns again, and rows back, drawing the net to the shore, full of all sorts of mental fishes, all sorts of principles of life.

Then he sits down and sorts his fishes. His will now arouses itself, to judge of the character of the things which he has drawn from his memory. He finds many living principles of goodness and honesty, and many false ideas of life, perhaps perverted notions of what has been taught him; perhaps wrong ideas which his parents have carelessly allowed to grow in his memory, uncorrected. Perhaps his parents, themselves, have had false views of what life is, and of how men should live.

Now, at this point, the young man finds, in his thought, a plan of securing means for his pleasures, by stealing a little from his employers. His mental fishing-excursion has brought sharply before him two classes of principles, good and bad. Which shall he adopt?

If he is trying to be regenerated, he will regard the true and good principles as good, and the false and evil ones as bad. And he will carefully gather the good into the vessels of his inward mind; and, at the same time, he will promptly cast away the bad. He will see that dishonesty, even in its beginnings, will never result in any good, or in any happiness.

But, if he is determined to have his sensuous pleasures, his love of pleasure will overcome his love of honesty; and then he will think that the teachings of the Church, and of his parents, concerning honesty, are not really good; but that they are actually opposed to his own interests. Then, in his affection and thought, he will put evil for good, and good for evil; in his folly, he will retain and cherish the bad principles, and cast away the good.

Good, to him, will mean what seems good to his self-love; what will agree with his lusts. But "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." For they will go on from bad to worse, even while they imagine they are going towards happiness.

Take the same case, of the young man tempted to steal from his employers. Having determined to satisfy his desire for sensuous pleasures, he rejects the truths which counsel honesty. He defrauds his employers, perhaps but a little, at first. But his dishonesty grows by indulgence. And, after a continued course of stealing, his sense of integrity is more and more blunted; and he loses the ability to distinguish clearly between good and evil, and truth and falsity. He becomes fixed in the character of a thief. And sooner or later, he is overtaken by exposure. And then even his selfish pleasures must come to an end.

And, in fact, even while he was not suspected, he was suffering daily torments, for fear of exposure. He has executed a judgment upon himself, by making himself a confirmed form of his selfish lusts.

Historical And Personal Application.

Historically, then, the text relates to a general judgment, at the end of every general church, or dispensation. Then the fishing goes on, in natural things, in this world, and, in spiritual things, in the spiritual world. And then the shore is in the eternal world.

Objectively, all spiritual judgments are executed in the spiritual world, because it is the spirit of the man that is judged, and such a judgment must be in that world where the spirit attains its full condition. And personally, each individual judgment is in the spiritual part of us, even while we are on the earth. At each stage of our spirit's progress, it is judged: and thus it enters its next stage.

Before we become fixed in character we are always, spiritually, either preparing for, or undergoing, a judgment. The angels of Divine Truth are always drawing to shore the things that swim in our memory; and they are always sorting those things, and separating the evil from among the good. And the Church is helping us to do our part of the work, by instructing us in the principles which we need to know, and pointing out to us the way of heavenly life. And we are always casting the net of our doctrine into the sea of our memory, and into the letter of the Divine Word, and drawing to shore the knowledge that abound in the Scriptures. As we take them, some of these are good and true, and others are falsified by our misconception of their meaning. And, in our rational thought, we gather the good, for use, and cast away the bad. The Penalties. The parable declares that after

the evil are separated from the good, the evil shall be cast “into a furnace of fire,” and there shall be, among the evil, “wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The “furnace of fire” is not merely something outside of the man; it is the mass of the man’s own burning evil passions. “Weeping” is the anguish felt by evil men, because they cannot satisfy their evil desires. “Gnashing of teeth” is the chafing and collision of thought against what the evil men do not like.

There is no vindictive hell, in which the Lord purposely punishes evil men. The Lord seeks to create a heaven in each man’s mind and life. But men who resist the Lord, and pervert His principles, turning good into evil, and truth into falsity, make a hell in their own minds and lives. The judgment of men is merely the full development of their character. He who would be free from the results of evil, must give up the love and the practice of the evils, themselves.

Divine justice is also Divine Love; and it will never thrust before a man’s face a list of his outlived evils. Men are always judged by their character, not by their outward deeds, alone. When a man’s character changes, from evil to good, he has no need to fear any Divine wrath for the past. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live. . . . But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity. . . . in his sin that he hath sinned . . . shall he die.” “If thou wilt enter into life, keel) the commandments,” for they are the laws of life. Happy, indeed, both here and hereafter, are they who, in the light of the heavenly Word, sit down with the angels of Divine truth: who, in every step of progress, carefully examine the spiritual quality of the things which move their affections, their thoughts, and their conduct; and of whose life the angels may truly say, “they gathered the good into vessels and cast the bad away.”

12. The Instructed Scribe.

The Instructed Scribe.

(Matthew 13:51-52.) The Living Reception Of Spiritual And Natural Truths. The Question.

After Jesus had spoken the connected series of parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, He said to His disciples, "Have ye understood all these things?" This question is asked of each of us, in our inward minds. Having read these Divine parables, do we rationally grasp their spirit, hidden within their literal sense? For they will be of use to us, only in so far as we rationally understand them, and can adopt them in practical life. Only thus can a man come into an affirmative state towards the truth. If he does not know what the truth is, or if he understands it indefinitely, he will not have any well-defined and positive truth, that he can affirm and love. His mind will be in doubt, like the man who is uncertain whether he is traveling on the right road. The clearer the man's understanding of any truth, the more positively and affirmatively he can place his affections upon that truth. To understand the parables, spiritually speaking, means more than merely to see the truths that are in them: it means, also, to assent to these truths; to affirm them, as principles of practical life, for the government of both the spirit and the conduct. Therefore, when we hear the truth, the Lord, operating in the interiors of our minds, suggests the inquiry, "Have ye understood all these things?" The Answer. And how are we to answer our Lord's question? Our reply should be, "Yea, Lord." But in what way shall we make our reply? If we answer from our outward thought, we may, like Peter, asserting his devotion to the Lord even unto death, find ourselves mistaken when the trial comes. We do not easily recognize the quality of our ruling-love, which is the main-spring of our character. And from our outward thought, we may answer our Lord's question, without consulting our affection.

But, on the other hand, it will not do to rely upon answering from our affection, because we are, at different times, in very different states of outward affection; and we are apt to speak from this outward affection, only. How, then, shall we answer our Lord's question? Our daily life is our answer. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Our life must give an answer, because, in the life, we have the union of our affection and our thought.

If we read the parables of our Lord, and adopt their inward truths as the practical precepts of our daily life; if we allow them to form our affections, thoughts and conduct; then we are in a positive and affirmative state towards these truths. We know they are true, as surely as we know the primary principles of mathematics are true. We understand them, we love them, and we do them. And when we are in this condition of inward and outward life, our life, itself, speaks its answer, "Yea, Lord." And it is of no avail for us to answer in any other way, if we do not, at the same time, answer in our daily life. "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" For the life is the summing up of the whole man. And he who has a positive, affirmative love to the Lord, and to His truth, will necessarily show his love in his conduct.

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.” The Scribe.

“Every scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man, a householder, who brings forth, out of his treasures, things new and old;” i.e., those who are in an affirmative state towards the Divine Truth, being instructed in that truth, become living images and likenesses of the Lord; building up their life from the Lord, from both the spirit and the letter of the holy Word. The scribes were a body of learned men, who had charge of the Divine Law, and who, therefore, were called lawyers, or doctors of the ecclesiastical Law. They were also the copiers of the Law. And they taught the doctrines of the Law. In a good sense, the scribe represented intelligence in truth; for he was “learned in the law.” The scribes wrote, or copied, the letter of the Law of the Old Testament, and thus became familiar with it, and stored it up, as a treasure, in their natural memory. And the man of the Christian Church writes the spirit of the Law on his heart, and in his understanding, by living according to it. He is spiritually a scribe; he is a scribe instructed unto [or into] the kingdom of heaven. The office of the scribe was a good and useful one. But, in time, as the Jews fell into evils, they perverted the Divine Law; and then the “scribes and Pharisees” became “hypocrites,” exercising an evil power over the people. In the parable, the scribe is mentioned in a good sense. The Instructed Scribe.

Spiritually, a scribe instructed unto [or into] the kingdom of heaven, is one who is instructed in the spiritual truths and good principles of the Word of the Lord. For the kingdom of heaven is built up in man, by living according to the heavenly truths of the Divine Word. And the more interiorly the man understands these truths, the more interiorly he can live by them, and the more freely the kingdom of heaven can be established within him.

There is a great difference between being instructed unto [or into] the kingdom of heaven, and being instructed about that kingdom. The former is instruction in the rational understanding and acceptance of truth; and the latter is instruction in the knowledge of doctrine. And doctrine becomes truth, to those, only, who see it to be true. The Man And The Householder. The instructed scribe is “like unto a man, a householder, who bringeth forth, out of his treasures, things new and old.” The “man” represents the truths in the understanding, and the “householder” represents the good in the will. Both are mentioned, to express their union, in the regenerate man. The will is the inmost dwelling- place of the man; it is his private house. In the supreme inward sense, the householder is the Lord, Himself, whose house, or dwelling-place, is in the heart of the regenerate man. In a lower sense, the house is the Lord’s Church, and heaven; for these are the Lord’s dwelling-places. The scribe is said to be like the householder. As men love the Lord, and live by this love, they become like the Lord, or likenesses of the Lord. And as they know the Lord’s truths, and live by them, they become images of the Lord. The Treasures. The treasures of the Lord, as a householder, are all the heavenly good and true principles which are in the spirit of His Word. And these heavenly treasures are brought out in the letter of the Word, in the good and true principles, which apply to man’s natural conduct.

New And Old. And these treasures, which are brought out, are called “things new and old.” The “new” things are the things of the interior, spiritual life, from the spiritual sense of the Word, which are momentarily filled with new life, from the Lord. And the “old” things are the things of the outward life, the precepts of the external conduct, which are from the letter of the Word. These literal things are called older, because they are more distant from the interior and Divine Source of

all good, truth and life.

Paul speaks of the spirit and the letter of the Scriptures as new and old, when he says, “we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Man’s will is the treasury of his love, with its affections; and his understanding is the treasury of his wisdom, with its thoughts; and his life is the treasury of his practical goodness, or holiness. Thus the Lord fulfills His promise, “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”

Fulfilling The Law.

Observe that both the new and the old things are brought out from the treasure. The Old Testament Law is not to be taken away by the New Testament. Calvinists say, “We are not under the Law, but are under grace; i.e., we are not held by the Law; and we do not have to live by it, for the Lord, Jesus Christ, has fulfilled the law, for us.” But the Lord could not fulfill the Law in our stead. But, in His Humanity, He fulfilled it, to make it possible for us to fulfill it. And we must fulfill it for ourselves; i.e., we must obey the Law, and thus fulfill it, or fill it full of life and love. Jesus restored to men the opportunity to fulfill the law, when He reinstated men in the liberty to choose between good and evil. And we must keep the Law of the Commandments, as much as the Jew had to keep it; and even more; for, while the Jew kept it in its letter, only, we have to keep it in both its letter and its spirit. We must bring out both the new and the old; and we must bring them out in our life. The “grace and truth” that “came by Jesus Christ” did not do away with “the law [that] was given through Moses;” the opening of the spiritual sense of the Word of God did not do away with the letter of that Word; just as the opening of man’s spiritual mind does not make it unnecessary for him to regard the truth in his natural mind. The Lord said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” And, if there could be any doubt about what commandments were meant, the context settles the question; for when the young man asked which commandments, Jesus quoted the commandments of the Decalogue, given through Moses. Old things, relating to the letter of the Word, are suited to the natural mind; and the new things, from the spirit of the Word, are adapted to the spiritual mind. Both are necessary to a full human life. But the spirit of the Lord’s Word properly explains the letter, as the knowledge of man’s spiritual nature is the key to the proper understanding of his outward life. All the Divine laws are given to us, that we may obey them, each in its own degree, and on its own plane, and by that part of our manhood to which it applies.

All Truths Practical.

Thus this parable affirms that all truths are practical, and for our use; that, when we receive truths from our Lord, we should receive them in both their spiritual and natural senses; and that we should not separate these senses, because they make one, as a man’s soul and his body make one, by correspondence; that, as the Lord, Himself, unites the spirit and the letter of His holy Word, so we must unite them, in our affections, thoughts and conduct; for “what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

We should love, understand and do the good and the truth, in all their degrees, from inmost to outmost, from center to circumference of our conscious manhood. For spiritual good and truth, without natural good and truth, would be without form, or fullness, or power; and natural good and truth, without the spiritual, would be without inward spirit and life. As the interior truth of the Word finds, in the letter, its suitable expression, and its adaptation to man’s natural wants, so, in our

minds, the interior goods and truths will find ultimatum and embodiment in our daily conduct.

Thus, in every plane and degree of our life, and in every stage of our mental progress, we may know that our idea of the truth is the right one, if it makes one in the spirit and in the letter, and is inwardly and outwardly consistent. And we may always know that we have a wrong idea, if the apparent spiritual truth yields no corresponding rule for our outward conduct.

Personal Influence. And so, in all our association with others, we need to make our influence good, both spiritually and naturally. The world does not love the new things of the spirit. It does not acknowledge the New-Church, in which spiritual things are made plain, and in which our spiritual mind is to be made into a new heaven, and our natural mind into a new earth. The world loves the old things of outward life. And the world calls men good and, generous, when they give to others of their outward treasures, the old things of the natural man. And yet we do men more good, and a higher kind of good, when we open our treasures, and give them the new things of spiritual life. The bread that feeds their immortal souls is far more valuable than that which feeds their temporary bodies. But, in this world, both are necessary; and it is right for us to give them both.

We, too, are scribes; we are daily and deeply inscribing upon our own hearts the principles we love, and on which we live. By and in our lives, we are writing our books of life. And we shall be judged by the things that are written in our books; not by the things that we expect, some time, to write, when we feel more like doing so; not by our mere sentimental attachment to good principles; but by the principles which we have actually written into our own daily life. We can bring out, in the next world, only what we have put into the books, in this world. If we desire and work for, outward things, only, we shall lay up treasures on earth, and remain poor towards heaven; but, if we lay up spiritual treasures for spiritual uses, and for good natural uses, which make one with spiritual uses, then we shall lay up treasures in the heaven of our spirit, and also upon the earth of our natural mind.

And, in such a life, we can daily bring forth, out of our treasures, things new and old.”

13. The Unmerciful Servant.

The Unmerciful Servant.

(Matthew 18:23-35.) An Unforgiving Spirit. The Principle. The law of spiritual life is use. The good that we love, and the truth that we think, become ours, for actual life, only in the degree that we act from them, and thus embody them in our conduct. The point of the parable is the illustration of this law of spiritual life, as it applies to the principle of mercy, or forgiveness of others. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And this law is not an arbitrary rule, like the enactment of a legislature, but a spiritual principle of human life.

It is said of the Lord, "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful." And the reason is plain; those who see and appreciate the Divine mercy, are those who adopt it as a principle, and act from it. They can understand the Lord's love, in the degree in which they feel and act from a similar love, in their dealings with men. And, on the other hand, those who have no appreciation of the character of the Divine Love, are those who, in their own lives, are not making any effort to live from any such love.

Peter's Question.

Peter asked, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Possibly Peter may have had in his mind the Lord's words, "if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times a day turn to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." In the traditions of the Jewish elders, no man was required to forgive any injury more than three times, to the same person. And Peter probably had the common idea of the natural mind, that, as every repetition of an offence makes the offence worse, there must come a time when the offender goes beyond any claim to be forgiven. Some such principle is adopted in the criminal law of many countries. The Lord's Reply. And the Lord's answer must have greatly surprised Peter. "Seventy times seven," or four hundred and ninety times, was so great a number, that mentioned as it was, it clearly meant that men are to forgive others indefinitely, always, without counting the number of times. For the very idea of counting the times involves a natural desire to hold one's wrath until the offender passes the limits, and then to punish him. But the Lord taught Peter, (and also, through Peter, He taught all men) that our forgiveness of others does not depend on the number of their offences, but on our own states of mind; and that we are to cultivate a forgiving disposition, which loves to forgive, for the good of the other person.

What we need, then, is not to count how many times we have forgiven a person, but to see that any unforgiving disposition is evil, and that it must be put away, in the regeneration.

Seven.

"Seven" is a representative number, denoting what is holy. And "seventy times seven" emphasizes this holy spirit of love to all men, which should influence us, in all our dealings with others. "Be ye

perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect;" i.e., be moved by a similar perfect and unselfish love to men. The King.

"The kingdom of heaven" is the regenerate and heavenly condition of mind and life. The king is the Lord, as the Divine Truth, ruling in the general heavens, and in the particular heaven of every regenerate mind. The Servants. The "servants," with whom He reckoned accounts, are the human race. Men become truly the servants of the Lord, as they live in love, faith, and obedience to Him. To "reckon" with men, or adjust their accounts with Him, is to test the quality of their minds and lives; to show what principles are actuating them. This the Lord does, in each man, inwardly, and by means of the truth sown in the man's mind. The King takes account with his servant, when the man, properly instructed in the truth, reflects upon the quality of his own mind and life.

Every wise man does this. And a "reckless" man is one who acts impulsively, -without reflecting that a reckoning is to come. When the man reflects, it is the Lord who takes account, because the Lord moves every regenerating man to reflect upon the quality of his own character, and upon the influences that are bearing upon him.

Ten Thousand Talents.

There is some uncertainty about the exact value of the talent, because talents were of silver, and of gold, and they differed in value, at different times. But, in any view of the case, the amount of ten thousand talents was enormous, equaling several million dollars. And the value is intended to represent the immense and unlimited debt which we all owe to our Lord, for all His mercies to us. Literally, the reference is probably to the deputy of the king, a ruler of some province, who owed his position to the king, and who, therefore, paid tribute; as, in our day, for instance, the ruler of Egypt has been subject to the sultan of Turkey.

Indebtedness To The Lord.

Every regenerating man reflects upon what he owes to the Lord. And he sees how greatly he is indebted. Of course, much of this debt existed from the man's birth; but the man did not previously recognize it. And now, as he sees his indebtedness, he recognizes the fact that he has not, in his life, paid all his debts to the Lord; that he has lived for himself, and for the world, rather than for the Lord, and for his fellow-men. And he sees that, as far as his own exertions are concerned, he is hopelessly in debt, and utterly unable to pay all that he owes to the Lord; "he had not [the means] to pay." He sees that, of himself, he cannot live as he should live, to pay his spiritual debts; that he cannot save himself, and must depend on the mercy of the Lord. To Be Sold.

But, "his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made;" that is, the reflecting man sees that he is not, naturally, so living as to discharge his debts to the Lord, but that he is naturally tending downwards, to the hells, by a life of selfishness. And he is conscious that, unless he shall pay his debt of acknowledgment, gratitude and obedience to the Lord, he- will be condemned by his own evils.

Thus, to be "sold," would be to come into such a degenerate state, that his understanding would be fixed in false ideas, and his will in evil affections, and his life in sin; and that all his possessions, mental and physical, would be used for self, and for the unholy life of evil. As an illustration, it is said of Ahab, "There was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight

of the Lord.” In this state, the man will lose all that he could hold dear, spiritually; all that he thinks he has, of goodness, truth and uses.

Wife And Children, Etc. The “man” represents the understanding; and his “wife” represents the will; and his “children” are the affections and thoughts born of the union of his will and understanding. “All that he has,” are all the external things which belong to his natural mind and life. These are sold, sold into servitude, or slavery to evil, when they are alienated from the Lord, and devoted to self. The reflecting man recognizes this downward tendency of his natural disposition. Seeing his condition, he is alarmed, and pleads for mercy, acknowledging his debt, and his desire and intention to pay it, in time, and to devote himself to doing so; that is, he expresses his desire and intention to keep the Lord’s commandments, and thus to change his character, under the Lord’s direction, and by His mercy. His willingness to pay his debt, if possible, and when possible, represents his desire to be governed by the Divine Love, which is merciful, rather than to be judged by the rigid law of truth, which seems to be hard. The Petition.

These things are meant by the words, “Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” The man sees that, by the law, he is condemned, and that nothing except the Divine Love and Mercy can help him. He does not expect to be able to pay all the debt he has owed to the Lord, in the past: but he intends to make such amends as he can, by now doing all he can do; i.e., he will try to live as he should live. He will remember the Lord’s mercy, and he will try to feel, think and act towards others, as he now asks the Lord to do towards him: i.e., he will try to act from love and mercy, and not from rigid truth, separated from love: and not to hold others to a stricter account toward him, than he now asks the Lord to do, in dealing with him. The Lord’s Response. And the Lord recognizes the man’s condition, and aids him. As the man sees the Lord as a King, as the Divine Truth, reckoning with His servants, he is led to see and acknowledge his own debt to the Lord; and then, as he determines to do his best to pay that debt, this acknowledgment of the Lord, and of the man’s indebtedness, and his determination to keep the Lord’s commandments, now reveal to him a new phase of the Lord’s character, His Divine Love and Mercy. “The Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.” The man’s consciousness of his condition, and of his needs, produced humiliation, and a change in disposition. And these changes opened the man’s mind to a clearer perception of the real character of the Lord. For the Lord is always “moved with compassion.” But the letter of the text, being representative, does not utter spiritual truths in clear doctrines, but gives the outward and representative picture, accommodated to man’s natural mind.

Paying The Debt.

All that the man can do, to pay his debt, is to renounce the dominion of his self-love; to deny himself; and to take up the cross, and follow his Lord, by keeping the commandments, and looking to the Lord for support in his efforts.

Thus the man unites himself, in heart, with the Divine Love, which is Infinite Mercy. Then he is brought into spiritual liberty; i.e., the Lord looses him from the debasing slavery to his evils. And then the Lord forgives him the debt, because the man willingly gives to the Lord the life which he acknowledge to be due to the Lord.

These operations go on in the inward mind, in the spirit of the man. But the man has not yet made himself secure in this principle of forgiveness, because he must yet carry it out in his own conduct, and thus confirm it as his own. If he would make an opening for the Divine Love to operate in his heart, he must, in his dealings with others, allow the Divine Love to move him, and to control his action. He must be as merciful, and as patient, to others, as he sees the Lord is to him. As he does this, heaven will flow into him, and through him, to others.

But, if he does not do so, he acts from self-love, and then the Divine Mercy can not bless him, because he tries to keep it, for himself, alone. For the moment a man tries to use the Divine Mercy selfishly, and for himself, only, that moment he stops the flow of the Divine Mercy into his own heart, because he changes the character of what he receives from the Lord.

Thus the Divine Mercy can bless a man, only in so far as it can flow through the man, to others. For the characteristic quality of the Divine Mercy is the love of giving good to others. And when the man selfishly refuses to use the Divine Mercy, in his dealings with others, he destroys, in himself, the characteristic quality of that mercy. The Prison.

Thus, as the man declines to allow the Divine Mercy to fill him with its characteristic spirit, and to make him merciful to others, he stops the inflowing of the Divine Mercy into himself; and, being left without the blessing of that mercy, he is remanded to prison; i.e., he takes himself back into the hell which his own selfishness makes. Thus, “the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow- servants, who owed him a hundred pence.” That he “went out,” from the presence of the king, means, spiritually, that he went out from communion with interior principles, in his spirit; he “went out” into his external, his natural mind and thought. When he was in an interior state, he could see the Divine Love, forgiving men. But now he goes “out;” he begins to think and act in his external mind and life. Anyone can make good resolutions, when he sees spiritual principles; but only the regenerating man keeps these resolutions, when he goes “out,” into the common affairs of his outward life. The Fellow-Servant. The “fellow-servant” of the spirit, is the natural man, the natural mind. The spirit serves the Lord, and the natural mind serves the spirit, in the name of the Lord. Thus the spiritual mind and the natural mind are also fellow-servants, serving the Lord. The natural mind owes obedience to the spirit, and to the Lord. This is its debt of one hundred pence: all it can do. This debt is very small, in comparison with the spirit’s debt of ten thousand talents; because the natural mind can do very little, and on a very low plane, towards what the spirit can do. The mercies of our natural life, though they place us in debt, are much less, in quantity and in quality, than the mercies of our spiritual life. The amounts of the two debts are intended to show the vast difference in the value of the two parts of our life. They show, also, how great must be our Lord’s forgiveness towards us, in comparison to any forgiveness which we can show towards others. The Servant’s Demand. But the insincere natural man does not appreciate these facts. He has gone “out” from the Lord’s presence in interior truths. The man “laid hands on” his fellow servant, who owed him, “and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.” The man, thinking in his outward mind, demands that his natural mind and life shall furnish him all the pleasures he desires. He forgets that his natural life, also, should be given to the Lord. The neck is the communication between the head, representing interior things, or the spirit, and the body, representing exterior things, or the natural mind. Life from the brain flows through the neck, into the body. To “choke,” or stop, that inflowing life, is to kill the body.

And, in the mind, the analogous operation is to choke, or stop, the inflowing of the spiritual mind into the natural mind. And the man, thus spiritually choking his natural mind, also chokes the flow of the Lord's life into his spirit. "Pay me that thou owest," is a demand to indulge in the delights of self-love, and to make the natural mind cater to the evil appetites of the man. The Fellow-Servant's Reply.

"And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The natural mind acknowledge its duty to the spirit; it sees its duty to live by the commandments, at the bidding of the spirit. But, if we make our natural mind live a sensuous life, separated from the Lord, and opposed to His commandments, we throw our natural mind into prison, into the bondage of evil, which is hell. This is what the servant did, in the text, when he refused to show mercy to his fellow-servant.

Other Fellow-Servants.

"So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done." These upright fellow-servants are the truths in the natural memory, and in the conscience; truths which have been received from the Word of the Lord. These are very sorry; they produce remorse; they show the opposition between the man's life and the Lord's commandments. They accuse him to the Lord. Then the lord, the king, called the unmerciful servant, and rebuked him; i.e., the Lord, by means of conscience, shows the man his present state, as one of evil, and of ingratitude. The Tormentors.

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." The man, averting himself from the Lord, in his life, ceased to see the mercy of the Lord; and then he supposed that his sufferings were induced by the Lord, to punish him. And before he could again see the Lord's real character, he had to undergo temptation-combats against his own inclinations to evil.

Thus, when the man inwardly knows the mercy of the Lord, and yet outwardly feels inclined to be unmerciful to his fellow-men, he will be subject to temptations, until he pays his debts; i.e., until he yields obedience to the laws of spiritual life; until he gives up self-love, and accepts the Divine will, as shown through his regenerating spiritual mind.

He must keep his own natural mind and life in order, as of himself; and then the Lord will keep his spiritual mind in order. For the natural life is the base, on which our Lord builds up our spiritual life. Our Lord will inwardly fill us with every spiritual principle that we will practice in our outward life. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Every time we show an unforgiving spirit, we condemn ourselves, more than we condemn the other person. Even while we are complaining of the evils in the other person, we keep ourselves in worse evils. We have an opportunity to see our evils, but we lose our opportunity, when we see the evil in the other person, and do not see our own evils.

Mercy.

We must not, of course, mistake what is meant by mercy. Mercy does not mean indulgence of the evils of others, under a false external tenderness, which allows evils to go unchecked, until they burn out the spiritual life. Genuine mercy, is spiritual; it is training the man for heaven, by training

him out of his natural hell.

Mercy relates not only to our acts, but also to all our feelings and thoughts towards others. We are unmerciful, when we judge others by a stricter standard than that by which we desire ourselves to be judged. We are unmerciful when we cherish any unkind feelings or thoughts towards others.

Before we can come out of the prison of our natural evils, we must feel, think and act towards others, from pure, unselfish love; and this, no matter what their character may be. We must love to lead them out of evil, for their good. And to lead them, we must walk in the way, ourselves. We cannot drive anyone out of evil, while we are, ourselves, walking in the way of evil. The Lord always forgives all men; He has no feeling of unforgiveness. But no man can receive the practical benefits of the Lord's forgiveness, until in his own life, he acts from a similar forgiveness towards others. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Removing Evils. When our sins are forgiven by the Lord, they are not washed away, but only removed to the outside of our life. We are withheld from them, by the power of our Lord, and with our co-operation, while we are willing to be so withheld. But, if we cease to do good, and fall back into evil, we fall back into the power of evil, into the prison which our evils make for us.

Only the mercy and power of the Lord withhold even the angels from evil. And the angels, knowing this, desire the Lord to lead them, and to withhold them from evil. But the devils are devils, because they will not allow the Lord to lead them out of evil, and to withhold them from evils. The angels know that, without the Lord's help, they would be miserable. But the devils think they would be happy, if the Lord would only allow them to do as they please. Thus what the angels see as Divine Mercy, the devils think to be cruelty. "With the merciful, Thou wilt show Thyself merciful." The Unforgiving Spirit. The unforgiving spirit was one of the prominent evils which brought the Jewish dispensation to an end. So important is the principle of forgiving others, that it is the one point in the Lord's Prayer, which is repeated by the Lord, immediately after the prayer. Thus it is brought into marked prominence, as the principle which practically sums up the spirit of that model prayer.

For, why should we pray for mercy which we do not use towards others? If a man will not do to others as he asks the Lord to do for him, he condemns himself by the same truths by which he seeks to condemn others. Men cannot do anything for the Lord, except as they do good to their fellow-men. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Divine Forgiveness. This parable illustrates the law of Divine forgiveness. It shows the falsity of the old doctrines of "Vicarious Atonement," and "Justification by Faith, Alone." The old idea because justice was that the debt must be paid, by some one, so demands. But, in the parable, the debt was not paid; it was forgiven. Arbitrary justice was not satisfied. And, on the other hand, the sin was not wiped out, by any arbitrary mercy; but Divine Mercy operated upon the man, according to his state. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," because sin is death. In the parable, though the debt was forgiven, yet the man was afterwards cast into prison, for not forgiving his fellow-servant. But the fact is, the man was not imprisoned by the Lord, but by his return to his own evils, which imprisoned him in sin. It appears, to the natural man, that the Lord punishes him, because he cannot see that his punishment is the necessary result of his own evils. The Lord asks no

atonement for our sins; He asks us to abandon our disposition to sin, and our practice of sin. And as we inwardly hate evil, and outgrow it, and love and do good, the Lord's love can enter into our life. No arbitrary forgiveness can change our character. Opening all the prisons would not make the criminals better men. Nor would it make them any more truly happy; it would only allow them to plunge further into evil, and into the sorrowful results of evil.

Divine forgiveness is as constant, and as eternal, as Divine Love. But forgiveness does not take away a man's disposition to do evil. But when the man sees his evil natural condition, and acknowledge it, and looks to the Lord for help, the Lord's power can enter into the man, and inwardly uphold him, because he opens his will, his understanding and his life, to the Divine Influence. And then the Lord can withhold the man from evil; and can help him to say, "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." The man can use the Lord's power to help him, only so long as he is, willing to co-operate with that power.

Divine Mercy is not, in any case, from any change in the disposition of the Lord towards the sinner, but in the disposition of the sinner, himself. When the sinner looks to the Lord, in love, the Divine Mercy can do, for the sinner, and in him, what the man would not, before, allow it to do, but what it was always seeking to do.

Divine forgiveness is not a thing of the past, nor merely of the future, but of the present. If we now are withheld from evil and sin, it is because we now acknowledge our weakness, and accept the Lord's aid, and keep his commandments. We are sustained, at each moment, by the life which momentarily comes to us from the Lord. The law of spiritual life is use. What we use is ours; what we neglect, we lose.

14. The Laborers in the Vineyard.

The Laborers in the Vineyard.

(Matthew 20:1-16.) The Order Of Regeneration.

Regeneration Gradual.

Regeneration is a gradual growth. Necessarily, our latest stages of regenerate life are the best. In the beginning, our reformation is comparatively crude and superficial. But our Lord leads us onward, upward and inward) step by step, further into the kingdom of heaven, which is a heavenly condition of mind and life; "For the kingdom of God is within you." The Old Idea. In considering this parable, probably it would be well to clear away, at once, the cloud of error which has long hung about it. It has long been used as an argument for deathbed repentance. But, the fact is, it has nothing whatever to do with that subject. The Old Theology has long taught that, as justification is by "faith, alone," such faith may be attained on one's death-bed, in the last moment of life. But, to make this parable favor such teaching, much straining is necessary. In the first place, death-bed repentance would come to a bad man, who had been living in evil, heedless to the call of the gospel. But the eleventh-hour laborers were not revelers, nor disreputable idlers. They were waiting for work in the public market-place, in the acknowledged place where men looked for employment. "Why stand ye here, all the day, idle? Because no man hath hired us?" Is that the reply of a heedless and wicked man? Was it his fault that he had not been hired? for work. He was well-disposed, and looking for work.

These men might, figuratively, represent those who had been waiting for the Lord, but did not know where to find Him. They were like the Gentiles, who, being called long after the Jews, were well-disposed, but ignorant, yet ready to follow the Lord, when they learned about Him. The Eleventh Hour.

Again, this idea of death-bed repentance confuses the eleventh hour with the twelfth hour. The eleventh-hour laborers did not fail to work. They began to work as soon as they were called. And they wrought as long as it was day. They wrought one hour. A dying man is one whose ability to work is at an end. He can not work at all. He has reached the twelfth hour. A dying man may be frightened into seeking religion, at the last moment, when there is nothing else that he can do. He may think he is willing to give up his worldly pleasures, when he is compelled to do so. But the eleventh-hour laborers went to work while they had the choice. They did all the work that they had any opportunity to do. So, in regeneration, we must do the work of repentance and reformation. Repentance alone is not enough; both the repentance and the amendment of the life are needed.

Again, if, in the parable, the eleventh-hour laborers represent those who repent at the last moment, then those who went to work in the vineyard at daybreak, must represent the life-long Christians. And yet these are the ones who make most unchristian complaints against the Lord, for giving the eleventh-hour repentant sinners as good a heaven as He gives to the early converts. If this is so, it would not argue a very good result of their long devotion to religion. We should expect

their selfish tendency to complain of their Lord's goodness would have been trained out of them, long before the end of their mature life.

But, the fact is, the parable, in its true meaning, makes no reference to death-bed repentance. No such doctrine is taught in the Sacred Scriptures. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," because sin is death. Spiritual death is not a punishment for sin, but a direct result of sin. And the death is in the sin.

Historical Application.

Historically, the parable refers to the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews had the Divine Word, but had only a superficial knowledge of it, and little regard for it. The Gentiles were ignorant, but well-disposed; and they received the Lord and His holy Word, while the Jews rejected the Lord, and rejected the Word, in spirit, even while they often made much of its letter. But all Scripture is given for our individual instruction and use. In its best sense, it refers to principles, rather than to persons or nations. It teaches principles, which are to be known, loved and practiced, in the mind and life of every man. The arbitrary division of the books of the Bible into chapters, has confused the connection of this parable with its context. It should be read in connection with the latter half of the preceding chapter, about the rich young man, who would not give up his riches, and the subsequent question of Peter, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have, therefore?" In this parable the Lord rebuked Peter's feeling of self-merit. The Householder. The "man, a householder," is the Lord, the Divine Man, who holds in His keeping our inward house of the mind. A man's inward "house," or home, is his will; for, in his will, he really lives and dwells. The will is the central life of the man; and his thought and his conduct are truly his own, in so far, only, as they are the free expression of his will.

We find, in this parable, the "house," the "vineyard," and the "market-place representing, respectively, the will, the understanding and the memory. The Lord inwardly leads men in their will, and teaches them in their understanding, by means of the knowledge laid up in their memory. In a more general sense, the vineyard is the church, in which truths are planted, and in which men are taught and converted, through their rational understanding of truth. But, in the individual, the church is planted in the understanding, or intellect, by means of the knowledge of Divine truths.

Hiring The Laborers. The householder goes out to hire laborers into his vineyard. Regeneration does not flow peacefully into the man, from the Lord, from the man's interiors, through the intermediate things, into the external; i.e., heaven does not simply flow into the man's will, and through his understanding, into his life. This is the order in which he receives life, after regeneration; but it is not the order in which he is consciously regenerated. In regeneration, the Lord's influence flows into the man's interiors, his will, but first shows its effect in his exteriors, his conduct. Then, by means of obedience to the Divine law, as a rigid rule, the man is brought to understand the reason of the law.

Thus the Divine influence comes back, from the exteriors of the man, through the intermediate things of his understanding, into his will. Then the love of good, in the will, is joined to the practice of good, in the conduct; and this is accomplished by means of truths, which are first placed in the memory, and afterwards raised up into the understanding, and then into the will. Thus the understanding is the vineyard of the mind, where the man labors to bring forth fruit, in applying

truths to his life. The Beginnings. In the young child, the first faculty which comes into conscious life, is the will, with its affections. Then the memory is opened, and facts are stored therein. Both the will and the memory are active, long before the understanding assumes any positive form. Children exert their will, and love to know, and thus lay up knowledge in the memory. After this, the understanding begins to operate upon that knowledge. When the rational faculty is opened, and the youth begins to think, as of himself, then all the knowledge laid up in his memory, become his laborers, working in building up his understanding. So, in our growth in regeneration, the new birth begins in the will. The will then acts upon the knowledge in the memory. And, through the understanding of truth, the man is led to unite his love of truth and his understanding of truth, in obedience to truth. The Laborers.

Thus the knowledge, or things known, in his memory, become active laborers in the vineyard of his understanding, which is operated by the will. Thus the householder comes out from the house, and hires the laborers into his vineyard. The house is the will; and, in the highest sense, the householder is the Lord, who is the indwelling Life of the man, the Holder of the man's inmost life.

Thus the householder goes out and hires laborers into his vineyard, when the Divine influence flows through the man's will, into his memory, and there arouses his knowledge of truth, and sends them to labor in his understanding, to give the man a rational comprehension of the principles of truth. The understanding is the man's vineyard; and yet, in the highest sense, it is the Lord's vineyard, because the Lord is the true Life of the man, and the One who begins and carries on all growth in regeneration.

Knowledge of truth are facts and ideas, in the memory. And they are waiting there, ready to be called into the vineyard, when the will sees its way to apply them to the life of love, thought, and conduct. They cannot, of themselves, do anything, until the will calls them to activity.

Differences. But there are differences in these knowledge in the memory. They are implanted in the memory at different times, and in different stages of the mind's development. And they are called forth from the memory, to enter into practical work, in the understanding, at different periods of progress in regeneration. And now we have the key of this parable. The laborers are the knowledge in the memory, not, at first, directly employed in the active work of regeneration, but gradually, and in a certain order, called into the mental vineyard, in rational thought. The Hire. The "hire" of each laborer is the fuller life which he attains. Knowledge, by working in our regeneration, becomes lifted up from the memory, into the understanding, and is finally united with the affections. This is its recompense. "The laborer is worthy of his hire." The pay of goodness and of truth are in themselves. We are not paid for being good, but in being good. "Virtue is its own reward." The householder agrees with the laborers for a penny a day, as wages. The, Lord, in His providence, allows the man, in beginning regeneration, to see something of the rewards of regenerate life. For, in the early stages, the man cannot cast out all idea of merit and rewards. The Penny. The "penny," or silver denarius, was the daily pay of the Roman soldier, and the common day's hire of working men, It was equal to about fifteen cents of our money. As silver, it represents spiritual truth. The reward of employing our knowledge of truth in working for regeneration, is the clearer and higher perception of truth, which results from the use of knowledge, as well as the delight felt by the mind in such growth. For then, the spiritual mind sends its influence down and out into the natural mind, and fills the natural mind with the sphere of a higher life. At the end of

each state, or stage of progress, the will again goes out, or the Lord goes out from the man's will, and arouses the knowledge in the memory to greater activity, that they may be lifted up into the understanding, and may become rational truths. The reward of a penny a day, is the constant daily lifting up of the mind to clearer comprehension of truth, and to warmer states of love. In this, there is a daily strengthening, directing and leading, of the mind, in the joys of regenerate life. The principles which are first made our own, in regeneration, are the most external, and most general; they are, then, the least pure and least perfect. There is much of self still left in them. A sense of self-merit taints them all. The man is still delighted with praise, and pained by criticism. The Hours. The different hours at which the different laborers were hired, represent the different stages of regeneration, and the order in which different kinds of knowledge are brought out of the memory into practical work in the understanding. The Jewish working day was from sunrise to sunset. As the Lord said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" The first hour was at sunrise, and the twelfth hour at sunset. The third, sixth, ninth and twelfth hours, are all multiples of three. And this is so, because the subject treated of in the parable is truth; and three is a number representing fullness in truth, a full period, as to progress in truth.

Remains. To understand this parable, we must remember the order of regeneration. During our infancy and childhood, our Lord implants, in our impressible natural minds) certain states of good affection, of love towards our parents, nurses, etc. These are stored up in the child's mind. In the language of the New-Church, we call these states "remains," things stored up in the mind, and remaining there, for future use. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant [or remains] we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

These states, or "remains," are stored up unconsciously to the child. But, as the man becomes mature, he must become regenerate, as of himself. Each spiritual principle enters into the man, from the Lord, inwardly; but it cannot become the man's own, as a part of his conscious life, until it comes out into a corresponding degree of his conscious, outward life. Here it finds a base, on and in which it can rest. The Order Of Regeneration.

So, every man's practical regeneration, in his conscious life., begins at the last, or external and natural degree of his consciousness. He begins by simple obedience to the law, as known. Then he journeys upward and inward. And the last stages of regeneration are the best, because they are the most interior.

First, the love of pleasure is subdued by the development of a love of duty. Then the natural love of the world must be controlled by the love of the neighbor, which is spiritual. Then the natural love of self must be subdued by the celestial love to the Lord. Thus, we gradually cultivate, in succession, the principles of obedience, faith, and love. But we notice that the order of development of these principles, in our conscious life, is the very reverse of the order in which the knowledge were implanted in our minds, by the Divine Providence, unconsciously to us. Through our infantile love to our parents, celestial "remains" were first implanted in our minds. For, then, we were less self-conscious, and less of our hereditary evil was developed; and so the highest angels could then be spiritually associated with us. Truly, "Heaven lies about us, in our infancy." Our parents were as gods, to us; and our love for them became the natural base on which the love to God could afterwards rest. And our obedience to our parents became the base on which we afterwards built up our obedience to the Lord; hence the great importance of early obedience.

After this stage, in childhood, our Lord, through our association with our companions, implanted the spiritual “remains” of love to our neighbor. And, further along, in the next stage, of youth, the Lord, through our desire to know, implanted the good natural “remains,” of the love of obedience to known law. These are what we call spiritual natural remains; i.e., on the natural plane, but filled with a spiritual principle, naturally understood. The Development.

But, as the youth matures, these last remains are first brought into activity. His “remains” commenced in the celestial degree; but his conscious regeneration begins in the natural degree. And it proceeds inward; until, in the full measure of regeneration, he again becomes as a little child, in the innocence of wisdom. And “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” The Lord, unconsciously to us, has stored away in the interior of our minds, these “remains,” or states of good and truth. And, now, as we arrive at maturity, or young manhood, He takes us by the hand, and seeks to lead us upward and inward, back over the pathway of our inward minds, on which He has heretofore trodden alone. From infancy to manhood, while our Lord was secretly implanting the germs of a future regenerate life, we were developing our individual and selfish life. And now, on the outskirts of our mature mental life, the Lord meets us with the truth of His Divine Word, stirs up the knowledge in our memory; and induces us to walk to the development of our inward and spiritual manhood. We form a natural base, in keeping the commandments; and from that base, and on it, we build up the higher manhood. The First And The Last.

Thus, the best principles, the undeveloped germs of which were implanted in our inward minds, earliest in our life, are the last to be made-ours, in our conscious life. And the last knowledge and “remains” sown in our mind, are, in the journey back to loving innocence, the first to be made our own. Thus, “the first shall be last, and the last first.” The outward things, which first engaged our young manhood’s affections, gradually sink to their proper place, as last, in the regenerate life; and the profounder principles, which our young manhood scarcely recognized, have become the first and highest, in our completed growth. The different laborers, entering the vineyard at different hours, represent the different kinds of knowledge, which are brought into practical use, at different stages of regeneration. The Eleventh Hour.

Those called at the eleventh hour are the highest and best knowledge, those “remains” of infantile love and peace, first sown in the innocent mind. And, to come to the development of these remains, and into the innocence of mature wisdom, is the work of the last hour, the last stage of regenerate progress.

Until then, these “remains,” or knowledge, were “standing idle” in the market-place of the memory; not because they were unwilling to work, but “because no man [had] hired them;” i.e., there was not, as yet, any thing in the man’s conscious practical life, which could appreciate and use these pure “remains.” When the young man begins regeneration, he is in an external state; and he naturally first appreciates, and puts to use, those knowledge which are of an external kind, suited to his state. It will be a long while, and he will have much work to do, before he can see the pure, infantile states of love stored up in his mind, waiting to be employed in his conscious life. These purest states will stand longest, waiting in the market-place, before any man will hire them. They will be the last to be called into the vineyard of the understanding, for practical thought and work. The Payment. But when the evening comes, at the end of life’s working day, and when the payment is to be made, i.e., when the man is to be completed in his regeneration, in the spiritual

world, these, who were called last to labor, will be the first to be paid. That is, being the highest and most interior states, they will be the first to feel the inflow of heavenly life, which comes from the Lord, to the will, and outwardly, through the understanding, into the life.

But, the more external things, lying nearer the surface of our manhood, are necessarily more remote from the Lord's dwelling-place in our inmost life, and are thus more remotely receptive of His inflowing life. The householder is now called "the lord of the vineyard," because the understanding is brought into intimate harmony with the will, and has also become conscious of the Lord's presence in it. The Steward. The "steward," who pays the laborers, is the rational mind, the thinking mind, which, in the regeneration, becomes the means of connection between the spiritual mind and the natural mind; and thus the means of carrying life from the spiritual into the natural mind. The Settlement. But the first laborers were disappointed, in not receiving more pay than was given to the last laborers, though they were paid according to their own agreement. These first laborers were the most external things, in the natural mind; and they still carried something of the idea of self-merit, and of deserving praise and recompense. The burden they bore was made burdensome by their own self-derived intelligence; and the heat of their day was made oppressive by the fire of their own self-love. Here we see the tendency of our most external and natural-minded thoughts to claim something for self, and to be unsatisfied with the Divine Providence. But the higher principles of our inward minds learn to abase self, and to exalt the Lord. They see that the degrees of heavenly life are not rewards, but attainments.

Quantity And Quality. The natural mind always desires to determine things by their quantity, and fails to judge by quality. The natural man knows no rule but external weights and measures. But the Lord teaches us that spiritual things are determined by spiritual weights and measures; i.e., by quality. The spiritual weight of a thing is its goodness, and the spiritual measure is its truthfulness. The spiritual "measure of a man, that is, of an angel," is not in feet and inches, but in goodness and truth. By the very nature of things, the natural mind cannot be in the fullness of regenerate life, in the same degree with the spiritual mind. But each can be in its own kind of fullness. Each can earn its penny a day. No wrong is done to the external man, in making it what it is. No wrong is done to the, foot, in creating it less sensitive than the eye.

Let each part of our manhood be in its own proper order, and it will be in its greatest possible happiness; as, in human society, every man is adapted to a certain position, and he will be happiest, as well as most useful, while in that position, contentedly performing uses. All who are regenerated, are brought into heaven, each in such degree as he has become capable of receiving.

Called And Chosen.

"Many are called, but few are chosen." They are "called" who hear the truth calling them to regeneration. But they are "chosen," who love and do the truth; and who thus choose the life of truth and good.

"The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." "For He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

15. The Two Sons.

The Two Sons.

(Matthew 21:28-32.) External And Internal Evils.

Hypocrisy. The hypocrite is even worse than the open sinner. For the hypocrite is inwardly bad, though outwardly appearing to be good. He knows what is good, and yet does evil. But the open sinner, though he does wrong in outward act, may be moved to reconsider his doings, and to repent, and to amend his conduct. The Context. The parable is closely connected with the preceding context. After Jesus had cast the mercenary traders out of the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him, and demanded His authority for his action. Then Jesus confused them, with a question as to the authority of John, the Baptist. And, in their baffled and confused state, He spoke to them three parables, which form a connected group; that is, the parable of our text, followed by the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, and that of the Marriage of the King's Son. In these three parables, the Lord showed the chief priests and elders, and the Pharisees, their own evil condition. In the first, He exhibited their hypocrisy; in the second, their intended malicious treatment of Himself, as a Savior; and, in the third, their miserable end, because of their rejection of His Divine influence. The Two Sons.

"A man had two sons." This "man" is the Lord, the Divine Man. And the "two sons" are two classes of men. The Lord, in His teachings, often speaks of two men, or two women, to bring in pointed contrast the two classes of men, the good and the evil; or, in some cases, the spiritual minded and the natural-minded; or, again, the repenting and the unrepenting. The Lord's Coming And Saying. That the man "came to" his two sons, refers to the coming of the Lord, Himself, in the Divine Humanity. The "coming" is an operation of the Divine Love, in adapting its manifestations to human conditions. And the man "said" certain things to his sons. "Saying" is the operation of the Divine Wisdom, in teaching men the truth. Thus, "came" refers to the Divine action upon the will of the man; and "said" refers to the Lord's action upon the understanding of the man. "Came and said" indicate the combined action of the Lord upon the man's will, or heart, and his understanding, or intellect. The Lord always "comes" when He "says," or speaks, anything to a man. He does not coldly teach men, from a distance, and thus leave men in doubt, or indifference, because of the lack of any moving of their affections. Whenever the light of truth, like a ray of sunlight, comes to a man's intellect, that ray always carries, within it, the warmth of the Divine Love, ready to move the affections of every heart that is open to the truth. Coldness and indifference, where they exist, are always on the part of the man. The Vineyard. The lord "came" to the first son, and "said," "Son, go work, to-day, in my vineyard." In an extended sense, the Lord's vineyard is the Church. But, in a personal sense, the individual vineyard is the understanding of the man, the intellect, in which the work of truth is done, and by which the affections are enlightened and trained. That which especially characterizes man, as distinguished from the lower animals, is his rationality, his ability to think, spiritually and naturally. Changes in a man's character are made by means of his rational understanding of the principles of truth, applied to his conduct.

Thus the Lord's vineyard is in the man's mind, in his understanding. As the light of truth comes to the man, it is the man's duty to hear, to understand, and to carry out, that truth; and his work is to oppose every evil feeling, and every false thought, and every sinful act, and to encourage every good feeling, true thought, and useful act.

To-Day. And the Lord always directs men to work "to-day," because to-day spiritually means man's present condition. And every work must be begun, and carried on, when we see its need. For, if we did not go to work now, in our present state of life, we should not be able to change our character and state. In every mental state, it is the work which is done in that state, that induces the next state of feeling and thought. The only way to rise to higher conditions, is to work upon ourselves, as we are, and thus prepare ourselves to rise to better states. So, all the commandments of our Lord are in the present tense; they are all to be applied now. Whenever a man is able to understand a Divine commandment, that commandment speaks to him, now; and it says to him, "Go work, to-day." The moment we comprehend a spiritual principle, we are in condition to apply that principle to our daily life. It speaks to every man, each in his degree of enlightenment; and each man can obey the principle, as he understands it. And his obedience to his present understanding of the principle is the means of rising to higher and profounder comprehension of it. The Eternal Day. In another sense, "to-day" denotes forever, because, if a man is regenerate, his day extends through eternity. "For there is no night there," in the heavenly condition.

Thus, in working to-day, we are not to suppose that we shall soon be done with all the necessary work. We must work "while it is day." And to the regenerate man, it is always day. But, while, in our earthly life, we must labor against evil inclinations, yet, in heaven, work will not be hard labor, but only delightful activity.

Therefore, when we begin to work in the Lord's vineyard, (either in the extended sense, of the Church, or in the individual sense, of our own intellect and life) we must enter upon our work with the understanding that it is to be carried on at once, and forever, and until it ceases to be irksome, and comes to be delightful. The General Meaning. In a general sense, the Lord's object, in the parable, was to exhibit the conditions of two classes of men, the Gentiles and the Jews; and, of course, at the same time, to display the real conditions of all men, in all times, whose characteristics should be similar. The first son was, in the beginning, rebellious, but he afterwards repented, and obeyed his father. The second son promised to obey, but secretly disobeyed. The Historical Application.

Historically, the first son represented the Gentiles, who outwardly disobeyed the Lord, because they did not understand His teaching; but when they were brought to understand the Lord, they obeyed Him. The second son represented the Jews, who, while acknowledging their allegiance to the Divine Word, and having the written Word in their keeping, still only pretended to keep its literal precepts, while, as to its spirit, they actually hated it, and opposed it, in their hearts. Will And Understanding. In the Gentiles, as in the first son, the will was better than the understanding; but, in the Jews, as in the second son, the understanding was better than the will. The first son was in need of intelligence; but the second son was in want of sincerity of heart. The second son was a hypocrite, making false professions, and profaning the letter of the Word. But those who do not understand the Word, cannot profane it; and, therefore, they are more easily brought to

repentance, by the opening of their intelligence.

Thus the first son, in the general sense, represents those who, as Gentiles, do not understand their duty, but who obey the truth, when they understand it. But the second son represents those who, like the Jews, have the Word, and understand its precepts of life, but are not, in heart, disposed to do their duty.

Each of these classes is called to work in the Lord's vineyard; i.e., to be regenerated; to plant and cultivate the seeds of truth, in their understanding, and in their daily life. The first son said what he should not have said, but he did what he should have done. And, as saying is from the understanding, and doing is from the will, thus we see that representatively, his trouble was with his understanding. But the second son said what was right, but he did what was wrong; and so his trouble was with his will. He was enlightened, but hypocritical. And how powerfully this parable rebuked the self-righteous priests and Pharisees, by contrasting their enlightened hypocrisy with the better condition of the ignorant, but well disposed Gentiles.

Gentiles. The Gentiles are those who, in thought, oppose the Divine will, and the leadings of Providence, but who, inwardly, do not really oppose what they believe to be good and true. And when they are enlightened, and come to act from their real will, they do right. Not knowing the real meaning of the Divine Word, they have many thoughts and ideas which are not in agreement with it. But, when they rationally see the truth of the Word, they follow its teachings.

Modern Gentiles

Any intelligent and observing New-Churchman can see that this is the condition of many men, at the present time, who are not connected with any church. The exaltation of faith above charity; the teaching of the false and superficial doctrines of "Justification by Faith Alone," and the "Vicarious Atonement;" have so emptied men's minds of the pure light of heavenly truth, that many men are put in a false position before the world.

Thinking men, in opposing irrational and superficial dogmas, which ascribe to the God of Love a most unlovely character, are generally forced to appear before the world as opposing the Lord's Church; while the fact is, that they are opposing wrong presentations of truth, false doctrines, which have placed the Lord, and His Church, in a false light before men. These men are Gentiles, who oppose, not the true God, nor the real Church, but only the false gods, and the corrupted Church, held up before their view.

Ignorant Opposition.

And, of course, as the Church became corrupted, and the Lord's Word falsified, men became more and more ignorant; and in opposing what they did not understand, they also opposed much that was really good and true. And further enlightenment in genuine truth, will reach their deeper will, and lead them to repentance and reformation. And this is the work of the New-Church, to teach genuine truth; to open the Divine Word in its inward and spiritual meaning; and thus to enlighten men, and to restore them to the Lord, and to His Church. And those who have been intellectually mistaken, but well-disposed, (though, like the first son in the parable, they seem rebellious against the new truth) when the light reaches their rationality, will repent, and go to work in the Lord's vineyard.

Wilful Opposition But those who, having the Lord's Word, are inwardly disposed to evil, will not accept the new truth. The clearer the truth, the more they will practically oppose it, as the Jews did to Jesus; the more He spoke against their evils, the less they desired to repent, and the more they plotted to destroy Him. When the Lord had spoken the parable, He asked the chief-priests and elders, "whether of the twain did the will of his father?" And they, of course, had to answer, "The first." The Lord has given every man the rational ability to see the practical truth of His Word. Of course, men need instruction, for enlightenment. But when they are properly instructed in plain truth, if they are well-disposed towards the truth, they will repent, and go to work, to live by the truth.

Internal And External.

Now, there is another sense, in which the parable is very practical. There are two sides to human character, the internal and the external, the spiritual and the natural. In the regenerate man, these two sides act together, as one; for the inward and outward characters are in harmony, both being good and true. And so, in the confirmedly evil character, the inward and the outward phases of character are in agreement; for both are evil and false. And yet the evil man may put on an appearance of outward goodness. He may keep the letter of the Divine law, in outward act, while he breaks the spirit of the law, in his secret intentions. His mere external is better than his internal; his outward conduct is better than his heart. But there are others, whose internal is better than their external. They are regenerating, but they have not yet brought their external mind under control. Such a man will have some inward disposition to be good, and to do right, while, at the same time, his natural mind will be full of hereditary inclinations to evil. He will be a double character; not like the hypocrite, with intentional duplicity, but with a sincere doubleness. That is, when he feels and thinks in and from his inward consciousness, in his spirit, he will be disposed to love and do what is good, true and useful. But, when he goes down into his outward, natural mind, and feels and thinks from his hereditary inclinations to evils, he will be opposed to what is good. He is, as it were, two different men, at different times. Everyone who is trying to be regenerated has experienced these different conditions of mind. The Two Classes.

Now, the parable brings up the question of the conditions of these two classes of men; first, those who, in outward life, break the letter of the Divine law, and yet who repent, and amend their lives, and are regenerated; and second, those who, while outwardly pretending to keep the law, are, in spirit, opposed to the spirit of the truth, and who are not willing to repent, nor to amend their lives. And the parable teaches us that outward infirmities of character, though evil, are not so profoundly and fixedly evil, as a corrupt disposition of the will, even when the latter is joined with an apparently orderly outward life. In the first case, the internal is better than the external; and the internal will finally control the external; but, in the second case, the external is better than the internal; and, therefore, the external is hypocritical, not being from the heart. In the first case, heaven and hell are struggling for the mastery of the man; but, in the second case, hell is in full control; and the orderly external is merely assumed to deceive, as the wolf puts on the clothing of the sheep.

Remains. In the first son, the "remains," or states of good, stored up in the man's inward mind, by the Lord, were not closed up by evils of the will; and so, by these "remains," the Lord could operate, to bring the man to repentance. But, in the case of the second son, his evils of the heart,

voluntarily made his own by life, had choked his “remains,” and defeated the Divine influence. The first son repented; and, with repentance, and a new heart, came a new life. But, with the second son, there was no repentance, no new heart, and hence no new life. The second son was as a “whited sepulcher,” appearing well, outside, but, within, full of death and corruption. “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven.” The first son is one who speaks against the Son of Man, or the letter of the Word, or external truth; but the second son is one who speaks against the Holy Spirit, the interior truth, the spirit of the Word.

John And Jesus.

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders, “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him.”

John the Baptist represented the Word in the letter, calling men to repentance in the conduct. The baptism of John was Jewish baptism, not Christian; it called men to return to the law, as taught in the letter of the Word, and by the prophets of Israel. But the baptism of Jesus was more interior; it reached beyond the conduct and the external, and taught repentance as to motives, as to the will and understanding, lying within the conduct. Those Jews who received John, and who amended their conduct, thus formed a base on which to build up a new character, in the baptism of Jesus. Thus John prepared the way for Jesus. But those who did not receive John, and did not amend their lives by the Jewish standard, the external, did not receive Jesus. For the man who will not reform his life, has no base to support regeneration. But even those who were in gross external disorder, if they heeded the call of John, or the letter of the Word, could come to regeneration, at the call of Jesus. The Publicans And Harlots. The publicans were the collectors of the Roman revenue, when the Jews were under subjection to the Romans. And, naturally, the publicans were hated and despised by the Jews. Matthew was a publican. Publicans represented the Gentiles.

Harlots, being in sin, represent those who love falses. These persons were not always hardened offenders, but, often, were young women, who had fallen into outward was of sin, without knowing, or reflecting upon, the iniquity of such a life. And, at the preaching of John the Baptist, many, both of the publicans and of the harlots, repented, and amended their conduct. They went into the kingdom of God; i.e., they reformed their lives, and thus became able to receive spiritual truth, and to be regenerated. The Pharisees, Etc. But even the repentance and amendment of the despised and outcast publicans and harlots, did not induce the hardened and hypocritical priests and Pharisees to repent, or sincerely to amend their lives. So, in our minds, if we are inwardly evil, when we see the operation of the truth upon others, or see what it would do for us, we shall not make any effort to repent. Jesus spoke of the Scribes and Pharisees as those who “say, and do not.” “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” The Pharisees were wearing broad phylacteries, and making long prayers in public places, and offering many sacrifices, and yet inwardly, they were full of evil, and of malignant anger towards the Lord. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have (done), and not to leave the other undone.” Of such a man

the Lord says, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The great obstacle to repentance, in the Pharisee, is his self-righteousness. By an outwardly orderly life, he hides his real and profound evils, even from himself. External evils are more superficial, and more readily seen. So it is easier for an open sinner to see his sins, and to repent, than for a pretended saint. Contempt of others, and self-righteousness, harden the heart against both God and man, and close the mind against the higher aspects of truth.

Illustrations.

Thus, for instance, a hasty temper, though bad, is less evil than a malignant disposition, which, under a smooth external, hides deadly hatred, envy and revenge.

Sometimes the Lord allows a man to fall into actual and gross sins, in order that he may see himself to be a sinner, and may repent, and be regenerated; when, without outward acts of known sin, the man might fall into the greater sin of self-righteousness.

But, both the sons in the parable needed repentance. And so did the Gentiles and the Jews, and the publicans and harlots, and the Pharisees and priests. Let no man pride himself in the fact that he is an open sinner, and not a hypocrite. Every man needs to repent. Because a man is not a hypocrite is no proof that he is not full of other evils; because he is not tending towards the worst hell, is no evidence that his evils are not carrying him to some hell.

Publicans and harlots did not go into heaven because they were not hypocrites, but because they repented, and ceased to do evil, in any way. Sincerity is not enough, without regeneration. Sincere sinners are neither hypocrites nor angels. But they are not working in the Lord's vineyard. And He calls them to work, by repentance and reformation; to learn the truth, to love it, and to do it.

Impulsiveness.

There is, in the parable, a good warning to impulsive persons, who speak from their external thought, without reflecting. They often feel rebellious, and say, "I will not," when they really will. And if they would only acquire the habit of inwardly thinking before speaking, they would see that they would finally conquer their external thoughts and feelings, and would act from better inward feelings and thoughts. Let them remember that they need repentance. Let them keep the door of their mouth while their external minds are rebellious. And then they will be able to change their external ways. Our Own Work.

There is no other part of the Lord's vineyard in which it is so important for us to work, as that which is included in our own minds. Here we can help to do the Lord's work better than any one else can do it for us. When we love good and truth, inwardly, and practice them in our outward life, then our Lord's will shall be done on the earth of our natural man, as it is done in the heaven of our regenerating spirit.

16. The Wicked Husbandmen.

The Wicked Husbandmen.

(Matthew 21:33-43.) The Rejection Of Divine Truth.

Summary.

Those who do not love the truth, finally reject it from their minds and lives. And the more it displays its character, the more persistently they reject it, and resist its influence. And, therefore, in the judgment, such men must spiritually perish, because they have no inward grasp upon the truth; and, the more their minds are developed in their characteristic quality, the more they will be opposed to the Divine truth; until, finally, they will reject it even from their memory. The Householder. The householder is the Lord; and His house, or dwelling-place, is in the mind of each individual man. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him; and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." The Vineyard.

Vines represent truths, growing in the mind. The Lord, as the Divine Truth, calls Himself "the true Vine." The vineyard is, then, in a general sense, the Church, where the truth is planted, and where it grows, and bears fruit in a good life. Personally, the Lord's vineyard is set up in the man's understanding, where the truths of the Lord's Word are planted. When the Church is represented by a vineyard, all the things of the Church, the knowledge, intelligence and wisdom, in the men of the Church, are implanted by the Lord, as a man plants the vines in a vineyard. The Hedge.

"And hedged it round about." The hedge served as a fence, for protection, and for separating one field from another. For the vineyard in man's mind needs protection from the man's own sensuous nature, as well as from the evil influences of others. "The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."

These green, living hedges, which protect the growth of truth in our minds, are the literal precepts of life, such as the Ten Commandments. These commandments, as laws of conduct, are our best protection against the attacks of evil influences. So the whole of the letter of the Lord's Word is a guard, a hedge, or protection, to the inward truths of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. "The world, the flesh, and the devil," are always prowling about our mental vineyard, and seeking to break into it, and to destroy it. And the hedge not only protects, but also distinguishes and separates one field from another. And so, in the regenerating mind, there must be order and arrangement of principles. We must learn to put the various kinds of good and truth in their proper places, in our love, and in our thought. Some things are more important than others. And some things are ends, some are causes, and some are effects. When we learn to make an orderly arrangement of mental principles, then the knowledge from the Word, which we use in doing this, are the mental hedges, which distinguish and separate one mental field from another. And, in fact, much of our spiritual protection depends upon our clear and rational distinction between different principles.

Spiritual Order. As we put the Lord first, the neighbor next, and self last, we protect ourselves from the dangers of unregenerate life, in which the heavenly order is inverted, and the disorder of the hells is established, with self first, and the Lord last.

Evil spirits always try to confuse our minds, in our distinguishing of good from evil, and of truth from falsity, in the practical life. But “knowledge is power.”

Observe the mind that has no clear distinction of principles; that does not know what the Lord is, and who He is, and what He teaches; that does not distinguish between its sensuous impulses and the promptings of guardian angels; and you will find that mind open to attack from all sorts of evil influences and false notions. Like a weather-cock, it is moved by every wind, and has no fixed position of its own. It does not affirm anything. But the positive, affirmative mind, with clear knowledge of distinctions, is on its defense against the suggestions of evil spirits. It distinguishes the quality of such influences, and hence knows their source. By carefully discriminating between what is of the Lord, and regenerate, and what is of self, and unregenerate; and what belongs to heaven, and what to earth, we are fore-warned, and thus fore-armed. We can see the enemy's real character, in spite of his pretenses; we discover the wolf behind the sheep's clothing. And this distinguishing of principles must be made in the daily life of conduct, as well as in the affection and thought; for where there is no clear rational discriminating of principles, the mind becomes confused as to good and evil; and then there is no practical and thorough separation from evil; and, hence, no thorough purification of the life. There is no sound hedge, for protection. In just such things you may read the history of every general Church on the earth. So long as its members retained a clear, rational and practical distinction between principles, especially between good and evil, the Church flourished. But, as the world cast its sensuous influences upon the Church, and gradually and cunningly weakened the minds of the members by indulgence, clear rational distinctions were lost, and confused in practical application; and then the members made idols of non-essential matters, and disputed over outward forms, while they allowed the inward spirit of religion to die out.

Thus, as the hedge is essential to the protection of the vineyard, so the discrimination of principles, by the Lord's commandments, is essential to the safety of our mental vineyard. The Wine-Press.

Then the householder “dugged a wine-press in it;” i.e., he dug a place for the wine-press, and set up the press, for future use. The Lord, as the Householder, prepares the man's mind for his future-work, in the attainment of spiritual life. The wine-press is used to separate the juice of the grapes from the pulp and skin. In our mental life, our works are the grapes, or fruits of the truth sown in our mental vineyard; that is, in our natural understanding.

If our works are good, they will yield the clear juice of spiritual truth. For a man learns spiritual truth by doing the natural truth; i.e., the truth, being carried out to good fruits, yields its spirit. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” A man, by the examination of the spirit and quality of his works, sees the spiritual truth that is embodied in them. This examining is using the wine-press. It is drawing out the very spirit and essence of his works. The wine-press, itself, is the rational faculty, the thinking principle of our mind, in which there is a pressure, or struggle, to develop the character, or spirit, of our doings. Using the wine-press represents considering our works, in the light of the Lord's Word; separating the inward spirit and motive from the outward act.

We need to beware of feeling, satisfied with the outward form of the act; and we need to examine the motive, as to whether it is heavenly or worldly; whether our works are wrought in God, or in self. "He that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Grapes are not wine. So, the outward good fruits of the truth are different from the spiritual truth which may be drawn from them. The Tower. The householder "built a tower" in the vineyard. The tower was for observation, and for defense. While the grapes were ripening, a watchman was placed in the tower, to observe the approach of any enemy, or wild beast; that any stealing, or any injury to the vineyard, might be resisted. And, at times, there was need of the fortified tower as a protection, and a place of retreat, in case of attack. The essentials of such a tower are that it shall be elevated, to give a large field of observation, and that it shall be strong, for defense. The tower represents interior truth, truth elevated above the surface of things, and yielding a higher point of spiritual thought, and, hence, greater protection and defense from attack. In an elevated state of thought, the rational mind is a watchman, which comprehends the state of things, and sees the approaching dangers of sensuous life. The tower was built of stones, representing truths from the letter of the Word, interiorly understood. Truths are lifted out of the memory, and above external thought, when they are taken up into the understanding, and into the heart.

Illustration.

It is a great advantage, to see the coming of evil before it reaches us. For instance; something has been said that has begun to stir up our bad temper. After our bad temper has been aroused, we justify ourselves, by saying that the other person made us angry. But, in our anger, we go further than we first intended. We do evil. Now, suppose we had set our spiritual intelligence on the high tower of interior truth, to watch our spiritual vineyard. Our intelligence would have seen our temper coming up; and would have known that it would go too far. And, being fore-warned of its approach, we could have been ready to put it down.

Thus, interior truth, truth seen and known in its spirit and motive, enables us to maintain a watchful survey of our whole life, and to observe our dangerous states, as they arise. Our tower is elevated, to give us observation and warning; and it is strong, to retreat into, in case of need. For there are times when a man's sensuous thoughts are confused, and when he needs the protection of well-known spiritual truths. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Letting Out The Vineyard. The householder, having made ready his vineyard, put it to use; he let it out to husbandmen. By letting out, the lessee takes the property, to use it, according to the terms of the lease; but not to abuse it. So is it in the human mind, and in the Church. In each man's mind, the Lord prepares a vineyard, and lets it out to the man, to use, to enjoy, but not to abuse, nor to claim as absolutely his own. The principles of the Church are taught to men, and, as far as possible, implanted in men's minds. And we can use them, according to the terms of the lease. These terms are the Ten Commandments. Under these Commandments, we have a right to take, use, and enjoy, all mental land and vines, all the good and the truths of the Church.

But, in using them, without abuse, we must acknowledge them to be the Lord's. And then, when we live in love, wisdom and obedience, we render to the Lord of the fruits of His vineyard. But, if

we regard these Divine principles as our own, and forget our allegiance to the Lord, and decline to render Him an account of our occupation and use of them, we commit spiritual robbery. The householder letting out his vineyard, represents, then, the Lord communicating truth to men, through His Holy Word, and thus preparing the men for the works of spiritual life. So, in the allegory of Eden, the Lord placed Adam and Eve in a garden, "to dress it and to keep it;" i.e., to use it, to keep it in order, and to protect it from injury, so that it might continue to bring forth the fruits of love, wisdom and holiness. The Man's Work. In this work, a man can, spiritually, as the husbandman can, literally, prepare the ground, plant the seed, take care of the growing crop, and gather the harvest. But he cannot make the seed, nor produce the growth. He can, diligently and faithfully, use the means that the Lord provides. And, at the same time, he can humbly acknowledge his dependence upon the Lord, without whom men can do nothing. For the Lord not only gives us the means, but He gives us, also, the ability to use the means, and He sustains our strength, in that use.

Going To A Far Country.

But, as we do our actual work, we seem to act from our own ability. The Lord's agency does not manifestly appear; He seems far away. We seem left to ourselves. This is what is meant by the householder going "into a far country," after letting out the vineyard. Places represent states of mind. We receive truth in the understanding, especially when the understanding is elevated, and open to the light of the Lord's Word. But the actual use of the truth is in the practical doings of natural life, when the outward thought is engaged. The Lord's Return.

But, as we bring the truth into our acts, and bear the fruits of the truth, and secure actual good from the truth, these good fruits seem to recall the Lord. Thus the Lord is not near to man in the mere form of truth, but in the life of truth. As we work in our own name, the Lord seems at a distance, gone "into a far country," because our state of mind is far removed from Him. Spiritual nearness and remoteness are in character, and not in space, alone. "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him; to all that call upon Him in truth." And yet it is said of the evil man, "God is not in all his thoughts." Evil is selfish; and it separates men from the Lord. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you."

We cannot see the sun, except in the light of the sun. In fact, we could not have known of the existence of the sun, except from its own light. So, we cannot see the Lord's presence, in our mind, except in the light of the Lord's own truth, communicated to us. Therefore, the more we look to the Lord, the more light we have. And the truths in our mind will thus be brought to good fruit. And, as the mental fruit ripens in goodness, the Lord seems to draw nearer and nearer, because we draw nearer to Him. The Time Of Fruit.

Thus, the time of the fruit draws near. Fruits must be formed, increased, and ripened. There are successive stages of growth. As the sun ripens the fruit, so the Lord, as the Sun of Righteousness, acts upon our mental fruits, and ripens them. And their quality will depend upon our inward motives. The time of fruit comes, when the truth, received into the understanding, begins to influence the will, and thus to come out into practical good works.

Every man's fruits are of the same character as himself; "for the tree is known by its fruit." All men bear some kind of fruit. Often, in outward appearance, the works of evil men resemble those of

good men. But their quality is different. And the quality of the grapes will show, when they pass through the wine-press. The sweetness, or bitterness, will be in the juice. When the principles planted in our mental vineyard begin to bear practical fruit in good works, then we begin to get messages from the Lord, claiming His share in these good fruits. The Servants.

He sends his servants, that they may "receive the fruits." These servants of the householder are the truths of the Lord's Word, which teach us our relation to the Lord. When any truth, planted in our understanding, begins to influence our will, and to bear fruit in our practical life, the Lord sends certain truths of His Word, to remind us that the good we have now acquired is not our own, but His; that we must acknowledge His ownership of our mental vineyard, and our accountability to Him for our use of it. In a historical sense, the servants of the Lord are the prophets and teachers whom He has sent, in all the ages, to call men to the remembrance of their dependence upon the Divine Life. In a sense abstracted from persons, the servants are the truths which the prophets taught; "as He taught by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." And it is literally true that men, the Jews, especially, beat, killed, and stoned, these prophets, personally, as men; and they spiritually persecuted the truths which the prophets taught from the Lord. The good that is in our works depends not upon their quantity, but on their quality. We may not claim heaven by the multitude of our good works; for, the moment we claim heaven, we claim our works as our own; and as we do this, we take all the heavenly quality out of them.

Abusing The Servants.

But, as the selfish man performs works that are good in form, he does them in his own name. And then, as he sees and comprehends the truths of the Lord's Word, which demand of him an acknowledgment of the Lord, he rejects such truths. He takes these servants of the Lord, and beats them, kills them, and stones them. When the truth is separated from the Lord, the life is taken away from the truth, in the mind which separates it. Truth that we claim as our own, is defiled by our evils of self-love.

Beating, Killing And Stoning. To beat the servant, here means to pervert the truth, by our evils of life. To kill a servant, is to deprive the truth of life, by separating it from love, and from practical uses. To stone the servant, is to falsify the truth, by wresting it from its true sense and spirit, and applying it to favor our evils. For a stone, in a good sense, represents natural truth; but, in a bad sense, it represents truth falsified, and made false, to the mind, by a false application of it. When the Israelites stoned the prophets, they represented what they were mentally doing, in falsifying the truths which the prophets taught from the Lord.

Other Servants.

"Again, he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did unto them likewise." In the Divine Mercy of the Lord, He still seeks to help men, even in spite of their persistent iniquity. The Lord always readjusts our spiritual circumstances to our spiritual needs. If we resist Him, in one way, He comes to us in another way, seeking to save us. He gives us every opportunity to repent and amend.

It has been so in every dispensation of the general Church, and it is so in the life of every individual man. The Divine Word is read, and preached, "line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little and there a little." Servant after servant is sent to us, with messages from our Lord,

calling for the fruit of the vineyard. If simple truths do not reach us, more profound truths are sent to us; truths more penetrating; truths in different phases and aspects. And yet, if we do not love the truth, we go on rejecting it, in every form; for, in every form, it rebukes our evils. He who voluntarily breaks one of the commandments, spiritually breaks them all. They are as a chain; if you break one link, you break the chain. He who intentionally rejects one known truth, rejects the spirit of all truths; and rejects the Lord, Himself, who is the Divine Truth. All truths are similar in spirit; for they are all Divine. And he who hates one truth, hates all; for he hates the Divine spirit of truth. He does likewise to all these servants of the Lord. The Son. No wonder, then, that the wicked husbandmen rejected even the son of the householder, when they had rejected his servants. "Last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." If there is anything in a man to which the truth can appeal, surely the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Divine Truth incarnate, could reach him. The beautiful life of Jesus, and His exalted teachings, would reach any heart that can be reached. In the coming of Jesus, we have both precept and example. But the evil leaders of the Jews were even more antagonistic to Jesus, than they were to the truths which were taught in the Old Testament. When they saw the spirit, or quality, of the Lord, they were, aroused to intense hostility to Him, because they saw His antagonism to their characteristic life of evil. "They said among themselves [literally, in themselves], This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." So, in every evil mind, the inward purpose is to destroy the influence of the truth; for, if the truth should establish itself in their minds, they would be deprived of their worldly lusts.

"This is the heir;" i.e., these are the very conditions which receive the Lord, and come into His love and wisdom. Evil men reason that, if they can reject from their minds this state of new life, which is the Lord's dwelling place, and which is heir to all that the Lord has to give, they can claim all the merit of their good works, and have no further need to acknowledge any Divine agency in their lives.

Man inherits all his spiritual life from the Lord. And that principle, in man, which opens him to the reception of heavenly life, is the principle of innocence, coupled with humility. But, to the self-exalting mind, nothing else is so abhorrent as humble innocence. The self-lover makes every effort to crush out any beginning of such a principle in his mind. Thus, in the evil man, the external mind resists every attempt of the Lord to open the man's interior mind.

Three. The evil husbandmen three times resisted the will of the householder; they resisted the first and the second companies of servants, and then resisted the son. "Three," as a representative number, denotes fullness, completeness, as to truth. Thus, in three times rejecting the truth, evil men completely and entirely reject it, and confirm themselves in the life of opposite false principles.

Catching,Casting Out,And Slaying. The husbandmen "caught [the son] and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." To catch him, or take him, is to reject the truth from the will; to cast him out of the vineyard, is to reject the truth from the understanding; and to slay him is to reject the truth from the daily life. Thus, the evil mind, brought to face the truth, voluntarily destroys, in itself, the life and influence of truth, and, hence, of all heavenly love.

Historical Application.

Historically, the parable relates to the Jews, who had the Word of God, and should have lived by it. But they rejected the prophets, and the Lord, Himself And the spiritual kingdom was taken away from them, and given to the Gentiles. The Lord did not actually take away the spiritual kingdom from the Jews, but they thrust it away. The Lord never withdraws His love from men. Not only are all things good and true and useful the gifts of the Lord, to men, but more than this; they are His continued gifts; and their goodness depends on their coming now from the Lord. They cannot be separated from the Lord, and preserve their goodness. The Lord's mercies are "new every morning, every evening new." "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." He keeps even the devils from being worse than they are. The Heir. The Divine Truth, as a son, or outbirth, of the Divine Love, is the heir to all things which Divine Love can communicate. For good comes to us by means of the truth. But, if we reject the Divine Truth, we reject the Divine Good that is within the truth. We reject all that the truth would enable us spiritually to inherit from our Lord. The Lord, Himself, as the very Spirit of Truth, is what the evil mind rejects, and casts out of its mental vineyard, that it may seize the inheritance; that it may banish all idea of God, and may claim all good and truth as its own; and may, in its own pleasure, so adulterate the good, and falsify the truth, that their Divine quality will be destroyed; and that self may be set up as its God.

Thus the evil man comes to regard his mind, and all his faculties, as entirely his own, and without any responsibility to anyone for his use of them. Thus, to "seize upon the inheritance," is to separate the heart, the understanding, and the life, from the Lord. Jesus said, "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration shall inherit everlasting life." "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever." And, as regeneration unites us with the Lord, the regenerate man, and the Church, are often, in the Scriptures, called "the inheritance of the Lord." The Consequences.

After stating the evil actions of the wicked husbandmen, Jesus said, "When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard, cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" That is, what will be the result of their own evils? For the Lord will not injure them. The punishment of evil comes from its own character and conditions, and not from the Lord. To the evil men, themselves, the penalty seems to come from the Lord; for they think, if He had been willing, He might have arranged things otherwise, making evil always pleasant in its results. But this would not be possible. The Lord is good, truth and life. And all life, and all joy, must be in and from Him. And, necessarily, the man who voluntarily and knowingly separates himself from the Lord, separates himself from all genuine happiness. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."

Therefore, when, in the Scriptures, it is said that the Lord destroys, or punishes, the wicked, the literal sense speaks according to natural appearances, and not according to spiritual truth. The Lord teaches us truth, and that truth judges us, by our treatment of it. So Jesus said, "I judge no man; the Word which I have spoken unto you shall judge you."

Evil destroys itself. "Evil shall slay the wicked." It is not God that destroys them, but their own wickedness. "The wages of sin is death." Jesus said, "I came not to destroy the world, but to save the world." And yet, though the Lord seeks to give heaven to every man, still, evil men cannot receive heaven, because they will not; for they persistently reject the only influences which form heaven in the human soul.

Taking Away The Vineyard.

Therefore, necessarily, the vineyard will be taken away from the wicked husbandmen, and given to others. All who live from the principles of the Lord's Word, which are summed up in the Ten Commandments, will be regenerated, and saved from the hell of evil. They will shun evils, as sins, and do good. But those who do not live by good principles, will not be saved; for they will make a hell in their own hearts. And, after death, they will voluntarily tends towards hell, because they are, inwardly, already in hell, and are not willing to be in heaven, because they are not willing to live a heavenly life, and thus to form a heavenly character. For it is the character of the man, and not the place, that makes heaven to be heaven.

Those who will not live by the truth, finally lose even the knowledge of truth. Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." So, our love to the Lord makes us delight in the words of our Lord. And, as we live by the truth, we grow in spiritual intelligence; we cultivate the vineyard. "Through Thy commandments, Thou hast made me wiser than mine enemies. . . . Through Thy precepts I get understanding. Therefore every false way do I hate." "A good understanding have all they who do His commandments." But "from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." which he seemeth to have."

Successive Churches. In the Divine Providence, whenever a Church has declined, another Church has been raised up, to keep alive the vineyard of the Lord. The First Coming of the Lord instituted the First Christian Church, after the ruin of Judaism. And, about a hundred years ago, as the First Christian Church became corrupted in doctrine and in life, the Lord made His Second Coming, in spirit, and in the truth, in the revealing of the inward, spiritual sense of His holy Word. And He instituted the New-Church, the Church of the New- Jerusalem, to take up the work in His vineyard. And, as the very corner-stone of this New Church, stands the truth of the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ, as one God, in one person, seen in three aspects, or manifestations. This is the "stone which the builders rejected" from the Old Theology, but which has now "become the head of the comer," in the New-Jerusalem. "O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Thy right-hand hath planted."

17. The Marriage of the King's Son.

The Marriage of the King's Son.

(Matthew 22:2-14.) The Rejection Of Divine Truth And Good. The Kingdom Of Heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of love, wisdom and usefulness, in the mind and conduct of men. The presence of the Lord's love and wisdom makes heaven in men. The "King" is Jehovah, the Divine Father, the "King of kings." And the "Son" is the Divine Humanity.

Marriage. In Jesus Christ, as the one person of the Divine Being, there is a marriage of the Divine Love with the Divine Wisdom, or, in other words, of the Divine Good with the Divine Truth. And, from the Lord, true marriage is in men, according to the degree of their regeneration. And the Lord's life is in men, in its integrity, in the degree in which there is, in their individual minds, a marriage, or complete union, of truth in their intellects with love in their hearts. In another sense, there is a marriage between the Lord and the Church. And so, in the Lord's Word, He is called the "Bridegroom and the "Husband," and the Church is called the "Bride and the "Wife." The complete marriage of Divine Truth with Divine Good, even in the ultimates, or last things, is shown in the glorification of the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ. And this Divine marriage made it possible for fallen men to return to a state of spiritual marriage, through repentance and regeneration. And, as the marriage of good and truth in men brings them into a heavenly state of character, so the kingdom of heaven is compared to a marriage. For, in fact, the kingdom of heaven is a marriage. And no one is mentally in heaven until he is in this condition of spiritual marriage. Thus, the spiritual marriage is the re-union of the two parts of man's mind, the will and the understanding, which God had joined together, but which man, in his fall, put asunder.

Marriage In The Word. The spiritual marriage is indicated in the letter of the Lord's Word, by double expressions, which are very frequent in the Scriptures, and which relate, one to the affections of the will, and the other to the thoughts of the understanding. For instance; "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Hunger refers to a longing for goodness, and thirst refers to a seeking for the truth. Thus the Lord's Word seeks to induce the spiritual marriage in men. In a more abstract sense, the "King" is the Divine Truth in the inward, spiritual sense of the Divine Word; and the "Son" is the truth in the letter of the Word. Thus the Lord unites the spirit and the letter of His holy Word, that men may be brought into a spiritual marriage. The Lord seeks to unite Himself to men, and men to Himself, that He may give them the joys of heavenly life, as a marriage-feast to their souls. The Literal Picture. The parable gives us a representative picture of these things. In Oriental countries, great men frequently provided feasts. A considerable time before the day of the feast, servants were sent to invite the guests. Sometimes, the exact day and hour were not fixed; but notice was given that the guests were expected. Custom included a second call, on the day of the feast, when the servants would again go around, to notify the guests that everything was now ready. The guests having already accepted the invitation when first invited, had thus pledged themselves to attend the feast, when summoned; and to refuse, when called, would be to violate their pledged word, and to insult the

host. The Historical Meaning.

So, the coming of the Lord was foretold by the prophets; and, though the time was not fixed, yet men were invited, and cautioned to prepare themselves for the day of His coming, and for the spiritual feast which He should bring. And when the Lord was ready to come, He sent His servant, John the Baptist, to announce His coming, and to summon men to the feast, through repentance and reformation. Thus the Divine King made a marriage-feast for His Son; for the Divine Truth is the Son, or outbirth, of the Divine Love. The Spiritual Meaning.

Personally, each of us is called to this feast, The servants who are sent to invite us, are the truths of the Lord's Word. Every truth teaches us to look to the Lord, in love, faith and obedience. All persons who hear, or read, the truth of the Lord's Word, are thus invited to the marriage feast, in which love and wisdom, or good and truth, shall be united in men's minds and lives.

But, "they would not come;" literally, "they were not willing to come." Men were in sensuous states of merely natural affections and were not willing to enter into spiritual-minded states. The difficulty was with their will. They abused their free-will. They had the power to repent and to reform, but they had not the inclination; they were not disposed to be spiritual-minded.

Historical Application.

Historically, those who received the invitation of the holy Word, and who would not go to the spiritual feast, were the Jews, who had the letter of the Word, but who rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, although He came in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Word. The Jews had been invited to the feast; and they had accepted the invitation, and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. And when He came, and sent out His apostles, as servants, to call the Jews to the feast, they declined to attend. They did not desire the kind of a feast which Jesus proclaimed. They desired a feast for their natural evils, and that they might be exalted over other nations. But when they learned from the Lord, that His "kingdom" was "not of this world," but of the spirit; and that it was to be entered and enjoyed by self-denial, repentance and reformation, they were utterly opposed to it.

Personally, all natural-minded men, who will not repent and reform, at the call of the Lord's Word, are like the Jews in character; i.e., they are natural-minded, sensuous and selfish, and averse to goodness. The Second Call.

"Again, he sent forth other servants," etc. Thus the invitation is repeated. Historically, the first call was made to the Jews, through Moses and the prophets; and the second call was given through John the Baptist, and Jesus Himself Or, apart from persons, and in a general sense, the first invitation was made to men's understanding, by instruction in truth, by which they were taught about the Lord, and heaven and hell. And then, when men had sufficient instruction to know what the Lord teaches, a second invitation was extended, to their will, by seeking to awake spiritual affections in them.

Thus, in order that men may truly come to the marriage, they are called, as to both parts of their mental nature, the understanding and the will. Thus opportunity is given to them to have their will and their understanding married, or united in spiritual conjunction.

First, by truth, the Lord teaches us who and what He is, and what we are, and what are the relations between Himself and us. And then, by a second invitation, He offers to Join Himself to us, and to unite us to Himself, by means of love. He offers to fill all our affections with genuine and heavenly life. The Feast. The feast, or "dinner," to which we are called, is a consociation of friends. And we attend this feast, when the Lord, as our Friend, and desire to be united with Him, in love, wisdom and usefulness. We love the Lord as a friend, when we obey His laws of life. For He says "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he' it is that loveth Me;" and Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. The Lord, from His own Divine Love, provides the spiritual feast; He provides everything necessary for Our Union with Him. He gives us the truth; and He fills us with love of the truth, as freely as we are willing to love it. He marries our knowledge and our affection, our truth and our good, as far as we will enter into the spiritual marriage.

So, in the Church the Holy Supper is a feast, a reception of the bread of love and the wine of truth, in union with the Lord. And it is called a communion, because, in it, the hearts of sincere men are brought nearer to the Lord, and are more fully opened to His inflowing life; and, at the same time, men are brought into closer and more loving union with each other. For men increase in the love of each other, as they increase in the love of their common Father. The Lord calls us to a feast in all the parts of our human life, will, understanding and conduct. Religion it not a matter of "faith, alone," nor of love, alone, nor of works, alone; it is the union, or marriage, of faith and love, in good works.

Again, religion is not in an austere life of self-denial as to all the pleasures of human life; it is in the fullness of our life, in all its departments, but purified and ennobled by a pervading spirit of love to the Lord. O Lord, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But they are the pleasures of a regenerate man.

Beast And Angel. In man are combined the animal and the angel. It is not the fullness of a man's natural and corporeal life that makes him a beast, but the abuse of it; the impurity of selfish life, and its divorce from spiritual life; its practical denial of the principle of a marriage between the two natures in man. All the orderly affections in man are good, in their way, and in their place. But their quality depends on their inward life. If we indulge them merely for selfish gratification, and irrespective of the good of other persons, they are selfish and evil. But, if we use them in the love of the Lord, He will fill them with a higher quality of life, so that they will be in orderly connection with spiritual things; as the physical body, in its condition of order, is moved by the indwelling spirit.

Thus, a man may eat and drink, and enjoy the life of his senses, provided he does so innocently. If he "eats to live," he may enjoy his eating, because it is useful to him; and the use is the real end in view. But, if he "lives to eat," his end, or purpose, will be sensual and selfish, and so the whole man will be selfish; for all the acts of the man partake of his characteristic quality. The Preparation. When the servants go out to call the guests, they say in the name of their master, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner," etc. "Behold" calls the attention of the guests to the matter, and so brings the case pointedly before them. So, the truths of the Lord's Word arrest our attention, and give us a pointed opportunity to know what is required of us.

"My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready." Beasts represent our affections, of various kinds. The Lord is called a Lamb, to denote His Divine principle of innocence. And Jesus called Herod a fox, to denote Herod's sensuous cunning, which the fox represents. Oxen

represent the natural affections; they are the every-day working affections which we commonly exercise. Thus oxen represent the external good of our life. But fatlings, as the young, or next generation, represent our inward or spiritual affections, which are of our second birth, or regeneration. Thus they represent our spiritual good. And, in the full life of the regenerate man, both the oxen and the fatlings are prepared for food; both his natural and spiritual affections are good, and are food to him. Thus, while the unregenerate man is in disorder, both inwardly and outwardly, the regenerate man is in order, in freedom, and in fullness of life, both inwardly and outwardly. The Lord calls him to feast in all things of his full and rounded life, because they are all purified. "All things are ready" for a full and useful life. The Lord seeks to unite Himself to men, in the joys of regenerate life.

Man's Response. But how do men generally respond to the Lord's invitation? Nearly every man will say that he loves the truth, and that he intends to do good. But, when the test comes practically before them, the majority of men seem to prefer their own sensuous life and selfish pleasures, rather than the joys of regenerate life.

Making Light Of The Invitation. When the guests were called to the feast, "they made light of it;" they allowed it to exert very little influence upon them; they held it in very light, or slight, esteem. The selfish mind, when called to the heavenly marriage of good and truth, regards that marriage as of no importance, and remains unconverted and unrepentant. To such a mind, the life of heaven seems to be of no essential importance toward the life of earthly pleasures. Thus the evil mind is inverted, putting the earthly life above, and heaven below. "Then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." The Ways.

"And [they] went their ways." Ways, or paths, represent mental ways, a man's ways of thinking and doing. In a good sense, ways are truths, which are ways of attaining good. In a bad sense, as in the text, ways are false principles, the ways in which evil men act. And these ways pass away from the Lord, and in the direction of self. So the selfish man separates himself from the Lord, and from the heavenly marriage of good and truth. The Farm And Merchandise.

"His own farm," relates to the principles in his will, or heart, his characteristic affections. For the farm is land, in which plants are raised; and land represents good, as distinguished from water, or truth. And, as contrasted with the farm, "his merchandise," or things of traffic, represent the thoughts in his understanding, with which he mentally trades. The man declines heavenly affections and thoughts, and the heavenly marriage, and prefers his own kind of life, his evil affections, and his false thoughts, which he joins in an infernal marriage.

It seems almost incredible that men should refuse the heavenly feast of regenerate life. And yet all history demonstrates the fact of such refusal. Men would not make light of, or hold as contemptible, an invitation from their earthly, king, or ruler, asking them to dine with him. How amazing, then, that they should show contempt for the invitation of their heavenly King. But sensuous men see nothing attractive in the life of spiritual good and truth.

Farms and merchandise are good, in their way and place; they are necessary and useful. But, if they engross our entire attention of heart, as well as of body, they become a snare to us. It is not merely the quantity of attention that a man gives to his external life and work, that injures his soul, but the quality of that attention. As long as he works for use, and for a good spiritual purpose, his

work is useful. But when men care for external things, only, they destroy, in themselves, all the good influence of the Lord's truth. The Servants.

Men hear the Lord's Word, and pay attention to it, through the "remains," or good and true states stored up in their young minds, by the Lord. These "remains" are also the Lord's servants. But, if men cling to the flesh-pots of Egypt, they become excited against the truth. Then, as the text says, "they took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." The first invitation was sent through instruction; and the second invitation came through the "remains," to the will. That the evil men "took" these servants, means that violently, and in their will, they opposed the truths of the Word; that they "entreated" the servants "spitefully" means that they opposed these truths in their understanding, and held them in derision and contempt; that they "slew" the servants, means that they violated such truths in daily life, and thus destroyed, in themselves, the life of such truths.

Witness how often the Jews slew the Lord's prophets, and even slew the greatest of prophets, Jesus, Himself, the Divine Prophet. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." The Judgment.

"But, when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city." The Lord knows, of course, all that is going on in men's minds and conduct. When it is said that the Lord heard, it means that men recognized the fact that the Lord heard; when the truth, which is the King, displays to men their own states.

These things are said concerning the judgment, which results from men's rejection of the Lord's invitation, and of the good offices of the truths of the Divine Word. As men fix and confirm themselves in the denial and rejection of the practical work of Divine Truth, these truths that they know, and yet hold in contempt, and abuse, bring them to judgment. These truths are laws of spiritual life; and they judge a man to remain what he has voluntarily and deliberately chosen to be.

Thus, as a man fills up the measure of his character, he necessarily comes to judgment; for judgment is the outgrowth and result of his character; and when his character is fixed, his judgment must be complete. If men have truths in their memory, and "remains" of good stored up in their hearts, the more they intentionally urn themselves against these inward servants of the Lord, the more they judge themselves to be forms of the evil which they love and live upon.

Thus, the truths of the Divine Word become an army, acting in judgment. But there is no anger, or retaliation, in the Lord, nor in the truth. The wrath is in evil men, though, to them, it seems to be in the Lord. For every man's idea of God is colored by his own character. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." The Divine truth does not attack men, even when they are evil. But, when the Lord sends His truths to men, evil men pervert the truth, and, in their own minds, falsify it, and turn it into falsity. And it is this falsity which destroys the mind that holds it. These armies are, then, the falses in the understanding of the evil man. And the anger which he thinks he sees in the Lord, is really the evil in the man's own will. These false principles destroy the murderers of good and truth, when they alienate such minds from the Lord, who is the only Source of life.

Burning The City. And they burn the “city” of these murderers, i.e., they destroy all the doctrines of truth, in the man’s mind. For a city represents an orderly arrangement of doctrines, in the mind, built up for the protection and use of the spirit.

Fire is the symbol of love. But perverted or evil love is lust; and such fire is evil. And this evil is the fire that burns up the city, or doctrine, of the unregenerate man. It is not the Lord that destroys men. “Evil shall slay the wicked;” and that evil is in the men, themselves. And because evil is a consuming fire, so the evil men, in the hells, are said to be in unquenchable fire. But the fire is in themselves. And the more they plunge themselves into evils, the more they destroy, in themselves, all good and true principles, and all heavenly marriage, and all the presence and influence of the Lord. Historically, it was the love of evil, and the life of evil, in the Jews, that led them to reject the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thus to bring themselves to judgment. Those who will not come to the Lord’s marriage-feast, are those who will not meet the Lord, in His Word, and will not love, and adopt, the Divine Good, by obedience to His precepts of daily life. The Second Company Invited. But now the king changes the form of his invitation, and calls to his feast another company of guests. “Then saith he unto his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” Men are worthy, when they understand and appreciate the worth of spiritual life; when, in regenerate love, faith and obedience, they exalt the Lord above all else. Worthiness, then, does not depend upon a man’s hereditary natural qualities, nor upon any outward circumstances, but on his state of regeneration. He is “worthy,” in the degree in which he enters into the heavenly marriage. But the Divine Truth of the Lord’s Word, though rejected by some who are instructed in it, yet finds a home in the minds of others, who have been in the falsities of ignorance; and these by instruction, are brought into union with the Lord.

Ways. In Bible lands and times, the poor were often called in from the streets, or ways, to dispose of the remnants of a feast. A mental way is the path, or direction, in which the mind moves towards its purpose. What a man’s mental way is, will depend on what his ruling-love is. High-ways, or principal paths, are the main roads of the mind; the ways, truths, or doctrines, by which the mind travels to its ruling purpose. In the text, the expression is, literally, “the partings of the high-ways;” i.e., the cross-ways. The highways to heaven are the truths of the Lord’s Word. But the “partings of the high-ways,” that is, the cross-ways, are the indirect ways of the mind, the ways less clear, and more out of the beaten path. The Gentiles, not having the written Word, did not know the straight and direct road to heaven; but they wandered in cross-ways and by-ways, in errors of opinion, in false doctrines. They were “a people that walked in darkness.” The Jews, as a Church, were unworthy. And the Gentiles were called to become a new Church. They were ignorant; but some were well-disposed, while others were evil. But we have, in our own minds, both Jew and Gentile states. And when our Lord cannot turn us from our evils by means of direct truths, on the main road of our mental life, He will send out His servants, the truths of His Holy Word, to appeal to our Gentile states of mind, to whatever may be well-disposed in our natural minds. And, often, where we would resist His plain leadings, He meets us in the cross-ways and by-ways of our mental life; and He reaches us indirectly, perhaps through some permitted discipline. Thus, the way to heaven is finally made attractive to all who have any disposition to walk in it. They “hear a word behind [them], saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”

Gathering The Guests.

“So those servants went out into the cross-ways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding-feast was furnished with guests.” Thus the truths of the Lord’s Word, neglected by our sensuous minds, still come to us, even indirectly, in the by-ways Of Our thought and feeling; and they seek to influence everything in our natural mind, both bad and good. For the Lord’s Word is sent to all, that all may be regenerated, if possible; that the kingdom of heaven and the feast of spiritual marriage, may be furnished with guests from the human race.

Thus the Divine Truth is given to all, and the Divine Providence is over all. There is no predestination of any one to hell. The Divinely-intended destiny of every man is heaven; the marriage-feast of the spirit is spread for all. And those who do not attend it, or who cannot remain at it, are those who, in spite of all that the Divine Love and Wisdom can do, are not willing to be drawn away from their evil and selfish life.

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment,” etc. By Oriental custom, when a king, or a great man, made a feast, and when the guests had assembled, the host came into the room, and passed among his guests, speaking to each. The “king” is the Lord. He comes in to see His guests when He sends His inflowing spirit into the minds of men. And the fuller inflowing of the Divine spirit into a man’s mind, produces a judgment upon the man. If he loves the Lord, he will then more fully reject his evils; but, if he does not love the Lord, he will then more fully reject all that he knows of good and truth. The man addressed as a “friend” [literally, an “acquaintance”], means one who is acquainted with the Lord, by knowing truths, but who does not love the truth, and does not love the Lord. The Wedding-Garment. When the king came in, he found a man without a wedding-garment; i.e., he was not properly dressed for the occasion. Literally, it seems very harsh and unfair, to censure a man for not being properly dressed, when, according to our modern customs, he would not have had any opportunity to dress himself suitably; for he was taken from the street, without adequate notice, and without opportunity to go home to prepare himself. But a knowledge of Oriental customs relieves the case of its apparent harshness. Oriental kings, and other rich men, kept large supplies of extra clothing, for the use of their guests. And so it was expected that each guest would appear in the banquet-room, properly dressed. And if he failed to do so, his action would be regarded as an insult to the host. And, very naturally, the offender would be expelled from the house.

And, in the spiritual sense of the text, the man would commit an offence, and would exclude himself from the spiritual marriage-feast, In the Sacred Scriptures, much is said about the garments of men, of angels, and of the Lord. For instance, in the transfiguration of Jesus, the changes in His appearance extended to His garments, also garments, or clothing, represent truths, in which the mind is clothed. Every affection is clad, or expressed, or manifested, in some corresponding truth. Excited and powerful affection clothes itself in vigorous and dire thoughts and language; and a listless, dreamy feeling comes slowly forth, in easy and moderate thoughts and words.

Illustrations. In Psalms 104:2, we read of the Lord, “Who coverest Thyself with light, as with a garment.” And light is the symbol of truth, for truth is the light of the mind. Thus the Lord covers Himself with truth, as with a garment. The garment of the Lord is the Divine Truth. And so the

Church is thus addressed, "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." As the mental marriage is the union of good and truth, or of love and wisdom, so the wedding-garment is the truth which is loved and practiced, and which is thus joined with love. For instance, the truth which is held by "faith alone," is not a wedding-garment, for it is not married to our affection.

Thus, the man who presented himself at the wedding feast, without arraying himself in the suitable clothing provided by the king, represents the man who expects to attain and enjoy the heavenly delights of regenerate life, by "faith alone," without waiting to clothe his mind in the truths of heaven, spiritually married to a heavenly love of good and truth, and confirmed in the practice of good and truth, in his daily life. The truths of the Lord's Word will call men to the feast; but they will also conduct them to the Sacred Scriptures, as the King's wardrobe, provided for His guests, that they may clothe themselves in suitable wedding-garments, for the marriage-feast of the King's Son.

Without A Wedding-Garment. But the man without a wedding garment is one who, at the call of the Divine Word, attempts to come into heavenly life, and into intimate communion with the Lord, without a thorough and living love of the truth; without doing the work of repentance and reformation. The Lord cannot give heaven to those who will not do their part to make themselves receptive of heavenly principles. And heavenly principles do not become fixed and confirmed in the man, except by a life according to them. "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" That the Lord saw the man without a wedding-garment, means that the presence of the Divine Truth displayed the real character of the man, as not heavenly. The Supreme Meaning. In the best sense, the wedding-garment, in which we attend the marriage-feast of the King's Son, is the truth of the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ, in which the Divine and Human natures are married, in the one person of the one God, Jesus Christ. In the light which comes to the sincere mind, in the affectionate reception of this great truth, the mind is inwardly open spiritually and rationally to understand the Lord, Himself, and His holy Word; and to commune with the Lord, in His Word, as in a feast of love and wisdom.

So, the Lord calls all men, even the Gentiles, to feast in the good and true things of His holy Word. And He informs them that, to enjoy this feast, they must first clothe themselves, mentally, with the truths of the letter of the Word, the commandments of life. "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

Thus, if a man does not love the truth, and will not practice it, his theoretical knowledge of it will not suitably array his mind for a heavenly feast. In the judgment, he will be seen to be without the life of truth; and then, as he develops his real character, he will lose even the knowledge of truth. For a man carries with him, into the active life of the spiritual world, those things, only, which he has built into his practical life on earth. And they who, knowing the truth, would neither love it nor practice it, will then utterly reject it, even as theory.

If they attempt to claim heaven, by reason of their supposed faith, the light of heaven will be let in upon their minds; and it will show them not only what their real character is, but also that the real character of heaven is not all congenial to them.

Speechless. And then they will be "speechless," like the man in the parable; i.e., they will be convinced of their unfitness for heavenly life, and unable to offer any excuse. Speech is the

expression of thought. And one who is speechless is one who has nothing to say, no thought to express, in defense of himself And spiritually, he has no thought in favor of heavenly life, for he is not mentally clothed in heavenly truth.

Binding,Etc. When evil is given control of the affections, and thus of the secret thoughts, it binds a man in slavery to sin. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Thus the king said to his servants, concerning the man without a wedding garment, "Bind him, hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." To "bind him hand and foot," is to bind his powers, or faculties, of the interior mind, and of the exterior mind; for the hands are the upper extremities, and the feet are the lower extremities. And they both represent our powers, which we exert by them, in the works of our hands, and in the walk of our feet.

Thus evil binds the whole man in sin. And, as evil men must be restrained from doing evil to others, it appears, to them, that the Lord binds them, when, in fact, they are bound by their own evils. And the Lord really comes to them, to set them free, "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Taking Away

Evils also "take" a man "away" from the Lord. His character grows more and more antagonistic to the Lord, and further from the standard "measure of a man, that is, of an angel." He takes himself away from the heavenly marriage. And he casts himself into outer darkness, or falsity.

There are two kinds of falsity, the falsity of ignorance, or want of instruction, which is excusable; and the falsity of evil, which is intentional, and not excusable. The latter is the outer (or utter) darkness, which falls upon the mind that will not love and do the Lord's truth, even when knowing the truth. Such minds "love darkness, their deeds being evil." "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." These two kinds of darkness are referred to in Isaiah 60:2, "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." The greater the light which a man has, the greater his darkness, if he rejects that light. It is not the Lord that rejects men, as it is not the sunlight that rejects the diseased eye.

Weeping,Etc.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Weeping" indicates an unhappy state of the will, because the man is necessarily made unhappy by evil, and cannot be free to carry out his desires. "Gnashing of teeth" is an uncomfortable state of the intellect, which is in violent collision with truths, and is disturbed by the light of truth.

Called And Chosen.

"For many are called, but few chosen." Literally, this may refer to the Hebrew soldiers. All men over twenty years of age were called, or enrolled; but when war arose, these men were passed in review, and the requisite number of the most fit men were "chosen" for the occasion. And the Hebrew soldiers were called bahurim, which means "chosen."

But, spiritually, all are "called," who hear the truths of the Lord's Word. But those are "chosen," who not only hear the truth, but also love it, and do it; i.e., who have chosen the Lord's truths as their principles of actual life. For men are not saved by knowledge of true doctrine; but by a life

according to true doctrine; for it is the life which spiritually marries their knowledge and their love, and unites men with the Lord. And “they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Many And Few.

Spiritually, numbers do not express quantity, but quality. The “few” who are chosen are those who cultivate the few necessary principles of a good life, love, faith, and obedience to the Lord. The “many” who are called, are all those who are living in the many selfish and worldly principles of evil life. Men choose their own spiritual destiny, by their manner of life. The Lord invites all men to the marriage-feast of goodness; but His gracious invitation is very differently received and treated by different men. The Lord does all that He can do, for every man. But men do not do all that they could do. The Lord says, “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more, to My vineyard, that I have not done, in it? Wherefore, then, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? . . . For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, and behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

Distinctions. This parable somewhat resembles the last one, on “The Wicked Husbandmen;” but that parable more especially related to the states of the understanding, and the rejection of truth: and the present parable relates more especially to states of the will or heart, and the rejection of good.

Illustrations. The fact that many men do not desire to enter into the heavenly marriage of good and truth, is sadly and abundantly illustrated, in these days, by the general looseness of the outward marriage-relation between individuals: for the general state of personal external marriage, in any community, will always depend on the general state of spiritual marriage, in that community. How little there is, in the social marriage relation, as generally observed, to indicate any heavenly origin. How selfish, sensuous and worldly it generally seems to be! Men and women enter into it for merely worldly motives, and thus pervert its holy uses. And the New-Church has a duty to perform, in this matter of social marriage. We cannot control the world in general; but we can control ourselves. We can, by teaching, and by example, show the relation between external and internal marriage. And, especially, we can save our children from the terrible falsities about marriage, that are now prevalent in society. We can teach them rationally to see that the man or woman who marries for any other cause than sincere and exclusive love, or who practices deceit in the marriage-relation, is taking a long step towards spiritual destruction. And woe to those who “make light” of either the external or the internal marriage; their spiritual destruction is impending. In every truth of His holy Word, our blessed Lord is calling us to the marriage-feast of heavenly life. And one of the most effective means of attaining a spiritual marriage, is a sincere, pure external marriage.

18. The Fig-tree Putting Forth Leaves.

The Fig-tree Putting Forth Leaves.

(Matthew 24:32-35.) Evidence Of The Second Coming Of The Lord.

New Life. The parable refers to the second coming of the Lord. Every coming of the Divine influence to men, in a new dispensation, is marked by a greater prevalence of good and truth among men. As men grow indifferent to good and truth, and finally oppose them, the Lord presents them in some other form, so that men, if willing, may renew their love for these principles, and may return to the practice of them, And every such return of men to better things, is characterized by the presence of more practical good in their daily life. And the increase of such practical good is evidence of a new inflowing of the Divine life, for human salvation. The new activity is the sign of a new life, as, in the fig-tree, the new life of summer reveals its activity in the softening of the branches, and the growth of new leaves.

Jesus had spoken to His disciples, about His second coming, and of its results, in bringing a judgment upon the Church and the world. In the language of symbols, He had portrayed the destruction of evil, and the triumph of good. The Things To Come. In close connection with the text, Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power, and great glory. And He shall send His angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." These are the things of which the text says, I when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors." The Spiritual Meaning.

Therefore, to understand the reference of the parable, we must obtain some idea of what "these things" represent. The Lord had been speaking of the self-destruction of the First Christian Church, by loss of love and faith, in a disorderly life. The darkening of the sun represented the loss of the light, or Divine Truth, because of the failure of love to the Lord. And the darkening of the moon represented the loss of faith, because of the failure of love to the neighbor. The falling of the stars represented the loss of the knowledge of good and truth. "The powers of the heavens shall be shaken" meant that the foundations of the Church should thus be broken. And thus, the dispensation of the First Christian Church would be brought to an end. But the Lord would conic again, as the Divine Truth, to give life to those who, being in the love of good and truth, were mourning for spiritual life. And the Lord would reveal to men the interior spiritual meaning of His holy Word. And the truth of this spiritual sense would be the means of gathering together the good and sincere among men, to establish a new Church. And the text indicates what shall be the evidence and sign of the beginning of this new Church.

Trees.

Trees represent the living, growing principles of the mind. In the Sacred Scriptures, frequent mention is made of trees, especially the olive, the vine, and the fig tree; which, in the language of symbols, represent the three discrete degrees of human life, the celestial, the spiritual and the natural. The celestial degree, represented by the olive, is the degree of love to the Lord, a state of mind and life in which a pervading love to the Lord is the great motor-power of the man's conscious being. This is a love of good. The spiritual degree, represented by the vine, or grape, is the degree of charity, or love to the neighbor; which is the love of truth, as distinguished from the love of good. The Fig-Tree. And the natural degree, represented by the fig, is the love of obedience to the law. This is a love of doing well, in conduct, sometimes without the profounder conscious love of the Lord, or of the principles of truth, as such. Thus the fig-tree represents the natural degree, and the natural man, or the natural mind of man. And, at the same time, the fig-tree must represent the natural, or external, Church, as distinguished from the internal, or spiritual, Church.

Taking the fig-tree as the natural man, his branches are his affections, which branch out, on all sides, from his ruling-love, or main trunk. And the leaves are the thoughts of truth, which come forth from his affections. The Tender Branch. As the return of vernal warmth, in nature, Starts the tree to new life, causing it to soften its branches, and to put forth new leaves, so, in the arousing of new life in the mind of a man, his affections become soft and tender; and they put forth new thoughts, new states of truth, in the development of new life. From the Divine influence, operating within the man, like the flow of the sap in the tree, there comes a new softness and tenderness of the affections. In our natural body, the soft parts are the most vital, and the highest, and the fullest of life; and the hard parts, as the bones, skin and hair, are the least vital, and the least receptive of life. So, in the tree, the life and growth are not in the hardest parts, but in the soft and tender parts. During the winter, the tree is hard. But, when the return of the warm season brings a new life, the branches become soft and tender, and then they put forth new leaves. The Warm Season. The warm season is when the heat and the light are both present, and are united in their operation. And so, mentally, our warm season of life and growth is when, in our minds, both the light of truth and the warmth of love are present, and are united in their operation. Our mental summer is the activity of a new life within us; it is a new state of the Church, in our minds and lives. And when our faith and our love are united, they come forth into good deeds, the fruits of our principles of life. And this state of mind is near, when our will begins to soften; to show less of the hardness of self-love, and more of the tenderness of love to others; and when, from this new tenderness, we put forth mental leaves, new thoughts of truth, as evidence of new life. Every active affection is continually putting forth itself in corresponding thoughts. And wherever we find a very active state of intellect, a multitude of thoughts, we may know that this state is the result of an active state of some affection. And when the intellectual activity is in spiritually good and true thoughts, which seek to embody themselves in good and useful works, we may know that a mental summer is near. For spiritual nearness is of state, not of time. Of course, times come, in the natural world, but they come together with states, or conditions, in the mental world. "The good time coming" is the good condition coming. And it is coming, when we are coming into it. The New Growth. When a new Church is being formed by the Lord, the first evidence of its growth is in the greater prevalence of thoughts about natural goodness. For all truth is practical; and it leads to practical results. And so, when a new life begins to operate upon a man's life, the first evidence of any change in the man's ways is to be seen in his thoughts about his conduct.

And, while the new life is beginning to operate, we must look for a change on the other side, in the breaking up of old conditions of feeling and thought. For a man will not have new feelings and thoughts, from new affections and new states of his understanding, until there has been a breaking up of the old conditions. As he gives up, and outgrows, old conditions, he enters into new states; as the boy grows into manhood as he outgrows boyhood.

There is a law of gradual growth, even in the regenerating mind, as in the tree, from the seed to the fruit. And, in the restoration to order, there is a parallel law of gradual growth, out of evil and falsity and sin, into good and truth and righteousness. The Old And The New.

Therefore, the breaking up of old conditions is a prophecy of the coming of new conditions; for it is the spirit of the new that breaks up the old.

And, as "man doth not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and as the decline of any Church must be followed by a new Church, in order to preserve the human race on earth; so, when we see the decline of a Church, and its impending self-destruction, we know that the coming of a new dispensation is necessary.

"So, likewise, ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near." For we know that the human race can be preserved in no other way than by maintaining its conscious connection with the Lord. And when we see one phase, or dispensation, -of the Church, rapidly declining, and its connection with the Lord closing up, we know that the Lord will soon institute a new dispensation, or new Church, for the salvation of men. The parable refers to both of these events, the decline of the Old-Church, and the rise of the New- Church. The Old-Church declined, because, from evils, of life and false teachings, there no longer remained in the Church, any clear knowledge of spiritual truth; but, instead of such clear knowledge and understanding, there arose multitudes of angry disputes, and sectarian bigotry. From evils thus aroused, men were led to despise the simple truths of heaven. They not only failed to see, and to acknowledge, the real quality of good and truth, but they also profaned and perverted such good and truth as they knew.

Thus the Old-Church was brought to its end. This is "the consummation of the age," or "end of the dispensation," which, in the common version of the Bible, has been wrongly translated "the end of the world." And, at this end of the old state of the Church, the New-Church began, so that men could still be saved from evil.

Evidence Of A New Church. By means of the fig-tree as a symbol, the parable shows us that the evidence that the New-Church has begun, is to be found in the growth, among men, of practical thought towards a more tender, receptive and useful life, on the natural plane. For men never accidentally grow better, without an efficient cause. If they become better, there must be something which makes them better; and that something must come from the Lord, as the source of all good. And so, a general condition of active thought for greater natural goodness among men, is positive evidence of the beginning of a new Church, whose truths are operating upon the minds and lives of men.

Judgment. The breaking up of old and disorderly states is a judgment upon men who are in those conditions. And after such a judgment, and because of its results, men are then more free to think, and to receive the new life.

We see this fact physically illustrated in our bodies. Sometimes, men are in unhealthy conditions, which come to a climax in a fever. The fever is as a judgment on that condition of the body; and, if the man lives through the fever, and returns to strength, he is generally in better condition than for some time before the fever; he is more free to receive new life, because of the breaking up of old conditions.

So, mentally, evils accumulate strength, until the mind is ready and ripe for judgment; and this judgment is effected by the operation of new truths, which are working for a new life. And, by the establishment of a new Church, a refuge is afforded for those who are willing to flee from the old conditions. The Lord's Presence. The Lord is always with men, as the sun is always with the earth; but men's evils and falsities, like vapors from the earth, arise to shut out the Lord's influences. But, as men's evils bring them to judgment, and an old church dies, for want of spiritual life, the Lord sends forth new life, for the salvation of such as are willing to receive it. And the breaking up of old conditions renders it possible for men to receive the new life, as a result of the storm is to clear the atmosphere for the coming of the sunlight. "It is near, at the doors." These doors are in our minds. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." The doors of our minds are on double-hinges; they swing both ways, inwardly and outwardly; and they open upward and downward. Our minds, like the ark of Noah, are of three stories, or three degrees, natural, spiritual and celestial. And there is a door opening into each degree. In the unregenerate state, the higher doors are closed, and the door between the natural mind and the world is the only one open. But regeneration opens the inward doors, and thus opens man's mind to the consciousness of interior life. When the old, unregenerate conditions break up, the new life comes to our mental doors, knocking for admittance. Though all good comes to us from the Lord, by an inward way, yet we first become conscious of the good in our natural minds. The first door of the man's conscious life, is that which opens to his natural mind. And, when new life comes to a man, necessarily it must influence him first on the natural plane, in the natural degree. Thus, natural good comes first, and forms a base, on which spiritual and celestial good must rest. For, on earth, we are in externals; we see principles in their outward application, because we live amid outward things and duties. And thus, a change in our outward life of conduct, is the first evidence we give of a change in our character. This Generation.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." This generation, or birth, means this natural plane and degree of life, in which our feelings and thoughts are now generated. And, in the regeneration, in the coming of the new life, we are not to expect to attain interior, spiritual life, by the passing away of our natural duties and states; but we are to prove our regeneration by and in "this generation;" i.e., in the natural degree of our life; in the goodness, the order, the usefulness, of our daily life amid outward things. "These things [will] be fulfilled," when our natural mind is filled full of the new life; for then the old conditions shall have been broken up.

Literally, "this generation" was the Jewish nation, which was not destroyed, but preserved, by the Divine Providence, in order that the Hebrew language and the Old Testament might be preserved for the New-Church. The Spiritual Heavens And Earth. But the parable was intended as a spiritual prophecy, as we see from the next, and last, verse of the parable, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," In all cases, where the letter of the Scriptures speaks of

the heavens and the earth passing away, the language is symbolic: and the mental heavens and earth are meant, not the physical ones. A new heaven is a new state of our interior minds, regarding heavenly things; and a new earth is a new and regenerate state of our external or natural minds, regarding the things of outward life. Old conditions are broken up, and new conditions are created. The New Life.

It is a very significant fact, that, in the parable, the fig-tree represents the New-Church; and it shows us that this New-Church is to be introduced by thoughts of new life, which are to effect greater practical goodness among men. Thus, the evidence of the operation of the New Church upon men, is not to be found in the dogmatic quarrels about doctrines, but by the budding of a new and more tender goodness among men, which shall put forth fresh and living truths, "leaves [which] shall be for the healing of the nations."

And, now, what evidence have we, to-day, of the silent working of a new life among men? The newspapers are full of reports of human iniquity. But, on the other hand, there are signs of the times which indicate better conditions.

There is a wide-spread tenderness among men, showing itself, as one must expect it to do, in natural good works, and practical truths for natural life; in the decay of sectarianism; in the care of the afflicted, in all departments; in the societies for relief of human suffering, taking form in hospitals for the sick, the wounded, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the imbecile, the inebriates, and even the afflicted beasts; in the growing desire for arbitration, instead of war; in the homes for the orphans, the veteran soldiers and sailors, and the aged men and women; in the improvement of the conditions of prisoners and prisons; in the discovery and use of anesthetics, for relief during surgical operations; in the multiplying of free schools, colleges, and other educational uses; in the prompt and indignant outcries against cruel punishments to men, children or beasts; and, generally, in a more sympathetic and healthier tone in the feelings and ways of men to each other.

Beginnings.

True, these things are on the natural plane; but they are the out-workings of a better life; and they are forming a base, on which to build something better and higher. They may begin in merely hereditary goodness, or kindness, which men do, when it does not interfere with their selfish purposes; but these things will come to be acknowledged as good and necessary; and they will be done from regenerate goodness, which is spiritual in its origin, although natural in its application.

Spiritually, it is not summer, yet; but there are signs of the coming of summer. The branches of the fig- tree are growing tender, and new leaves are sprouting. And, as good and truth are united, conjoined, on the natural plane, in good works, we may see evidence of the working of the New-Church among men. And, without this practical goodness, we cannot expect evidence of New Church life. Repentance, reformation and regeneration are certain to express and embody themselves in a practical goodness, which feels and thinks for the good of our fellow-men.

Hopeful Activities.

Since the "Last judgment," in 1757, (which was a spiritual judgment, in the spiritual world) the intermediate world of spirits has been in better order, and men are more free to think rationally. Notice the wide-spread change in the character of popular reading. There has never before been a

time when so many thoughtful books have had a wide circulation. There is great mental activity. Discoveries and inventions have come, and are coming, rapidly, in all departments of outward life. And all these uses are good. In olden times, a few men domineered over the masses. Few could read; and few had any voice in making the laws by which they were governed. But there is a rapid rising of the masses towards mental and educational equality with the leaders. Men are becoming less governed by opinions of others, and more by their thinking for themselves. Steam and electricity, by rapid and cheap communication, have brought men into more frequent and intimate association; and have given to the masses the benefits of the learning and the work of the leaders.

All these things are providing natural bases for the future building and growth of spiritual life. Externals are not to be despised, but loved and used, in the right way, and for the use of the spirit. The Lord's Second Coming.

Over one hundred years ago, the Lord sent a herald, to proclaim to men the last judgment upon the First Christian Church, and the coming of a New-Church, as the Second Coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ, a spiritual coming, in a new outpouring of light and life. That herald was Swedenborg, who was commissioned to reveal in the writings of the New-Church, the inward spiritual meaning of the Word of God. When that spiritual truth is known, loved and practiced, we may look for spiritual evidence of the work of the New-Church. Men will not glide into the New-Church, without true doctrine. But, as we love the truth, and "hunger and thirst after righteousness," the Divine Providence will see that we "shall be filled" with a knowledge of the truth, and an opportunity to live by it. The New-Church will descend into the minds of men, as the old conditions of old evils and falsities are broken up, and removed. "If any man will do His [the Lord's] will, he shall know of the doctrine." The softening of the natural man, and the new thoughts and deeds of natural good, give us some evidence that "the summer is nigh."

19. The Ten Virgins.

The Ten Virgins.

(Matthew 25:1-13.) Faith With Love, And Faith Alone. The Literal Story. The force of this parable is more apparent, when we consider the peculiarities of an Oriental marriage- feast. "These marriage-festivals lasted, sometimes, several days. But the period of greatest public, interest was that when the bridegroom conducted his bride from her parents' house to her future home. This was usually done at night, when the parties, accompanied by their respective friends, joined in glad procession; and the scene, lit up by countless torches, and enlivened by choral songs, or instrumental music, was particularly exciting and delightful." Several persons were stationed at the bridegroom's house, to welcome the procession. And, as the head of the approaching column came in sight, there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" The Jewish rabbi, Jar chi, says, "It was the custom, in the land of Ishmael, to take the bride from her father's house to her husband's, in the night; and to carry before her about ten staves. Upon the top of each staff was the form of a brazen dish; and, in the midst of it, pieces of garments, oil and pitch, which they set on fire. Holding these in one hand, they carry, in the other, vessels full of oil, with which they replenish, from time to time, their else useless lamps." The Spiritual Meaning. In general, the parable treats of the coming of our Lord, and of the judgment accompanying His coming; and in particular, it treats of faith joined with love, as distinguished from knowledge without love. In the last parable, something was shown concerning the coming of the Lord, and the state of things then existing. We saw that the old conditions of human life would be broken up, and new states induced. And now, in the present parable, we shall see another result of the Lord's second coming, in separating, into two classes, those who will outwardly receive the new truth; viz., those who will receive the truth into their will, as well as into their understanding; and those who will receive the truth as doctrine, but in their understanding, only. The Virgins. In the Scriptures, the Church is frequently represented by a woman, or several women. Virgins, being unmarried women, represent the Church not yet in conjunction with the Lord, in spiritual marriage. The Lord is the Bridegroom, and the Church is His bride. As the true bride looks to her husband, and receives into her heart his love and his image, and is loyal to him, in affection, in thought, and in conduct; so the Church looks to the Divine Bridegroom, receives His image, and is loyal to Him. "For thy Maker is thine Husband; Jehovah of hosts is His name." Good virgins, therefore, represent the Church, seeking conjunction with the Lord. In the Scriptures we find many things said about "virgin daughters," of Jerusalem, of Judah, of Zion, etc. Ten "virgins" represent all in the Church; for "ten" frequently represents all, or the fullness of anything. So we have, in the Decalogue, ten commandments, concerning all things of our inward and outward life, and all the good and true principles of the regenerate life.

Lamps. The virgins "took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Lamps, as hollow vessels, to contain material for making light, represent doctrines, knowledge of truth, mental forms, or vessels, to receive and contain the good and true principles of practical life. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The ten virgins, having lamps, represent those who are in

the Church, and who have been instructed in doctrine, and who have some interest in it. Mentally, they “go forth to meet the Bridegroom:” they seek the Lord and heaven, in the light of doctrine. The Wise And The Foolish. But “five of them were wise, and five foolish.” Heavenly wisdom is in knowing, loving and practicing the truth. Foolishness is in not loving or practicing the truth that we know. A similar use of the terms wise and foolish is seen in the first parable, in Matthew 7:24-26. A “wise” man is one who both hears and obeys the Lord’s teachings; while a “foolish” man is one who hears, but does not practice, the Lord’s truth.

Before the coming of the Bridegroom, in judgment, the wise and the foolish are together, in the external Church. We notice this fact in other parables of our Lord: the wheat and the tares grow together, for a time; and the sheep and the goats are together a while. But the coming of the Lord, in judgment, separates the two classes. And the separation is the effect of their difference in character.

Oil.

“They that were foolish took their lamps, but took no oil with them.” Oil, which is warm and smooth, represents the love-principle. In the lamp, the light is from the oil, not from the lamp, itself. The lamp is only the means of using the oil, to make light. So the lamp represents the doctrine, the knowledge, which, if filled with the warm oil of love, is a means of enlightenment and of intelligence. We see the character of oil, in its frequent use in the temple-service, in Israel. But an empty lamp represents empty doctrine, doctrine held intellectually, only, and not filled with the love of good and truth; and hence, not carried out in the practical life. The oil of love feeds the light of spiritual intelligence, but the knowledge which is empty of love cannot maintain genuine intelligence. The wise are those who receive the truth into their will, as well as into their understanding; they take oil to keep their lamps supplied; their love of good and truth maintains their spiritual intelligence. The wise have both religious knowledge and religious life; they know the doctrine, and they keep the commandments; they have a pure heart, an enlightened understanding, and a holy life, The foolish have knowledge, but they do not shun evils, as sins. The Absence Of The Bridegroom.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” In many of the parables, and other sayings of the Lord, we notice this element of the apparent absence of the Lord. “The bridegroom tarried,” away from the watchers; and the lord of the vineyard “went into a far country;” and, in the parable of “The Talents,” the owner of the money was “a man traveling into a far country.” In the open-minded life of a spiritual man, the Lord seems to be present, especially in the principles of human life. But, in the many external details of the sensuous life, amid the works and pleasures of the outward mind, the presence of the Lord is not nearly so marked: and, at times, He seems absent. For the outward and -sensuous mind is dull and obscure in its perceptions of good and truth.

Slumbering And Sleeping.

Spiritually, when a man is immersed in sensuous life, he is slumbering and sleeping; he is not wide awake to the inward realities of spiritual life, as he is when in a high and spiritual state of mind. Slumber relates to the dull state of the natural will; and sleep refers to the obscure state of the natural understanding. So, when men are instructed in the truths of the Word, they are left amid

the things of the world, to practice what they have been taught; and thus to confirm these principles, in the life.

Even the wise must live in the world, and must be useful in external things. This natural world is not their final home; and, while here, they cannot enter fully into the felicities of regenerate life. They all, comparatively, “slumber and sleep,” till the Bridegroom comes, to call them more actively into the blessings of conjunction with heaven. Men and nations must pass through stages of growth and development, until they come into conditions ripe for judgment. They must fill up the measure of their character. The Midnight.

But, when their day, or state, draws to a close, a new state begins. This is the “midnight” spoken of in the parable; it is the end of one day, and the beginning of the next day; it is a time of change, and of judgment. The Cry.

“There was a cry made.” A cry is the announcement of an event. So, in the natural mind, when its states are ripe for judgment, and new states are about to come, there is an inward announcement, an intimation that the Lord is more than usually present, in His truth, as known in the mind. When the truth stirs up a man’s mind, it recalls to the man the Divine origin of the truth, and the presence of the Lord in His truth. “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.”

Literally, a cry is the effect of a strong impression made upon us. But, spiritually, the cry means the impression, itself, the state of the mind, which expresses itself in the cry.

It is midnight in the Church, at the end of an old Church, and the beginning of a new Church, when the people that walked in mental darkness have seen a great spiritual light, and have recognized in that light, the coming of the Lord, to draw His Church into closer relation to Himself. The Bridegroom Coming. The Lord comes, when the Church is ready to receive Him; when “the bride hath made herself ready.” The New-Jerusalem began to descend to men, when men were prepared to receive it. And, in every case, the new and higher condition comes, by bringing a judgment upon the old conditions; and by separating the old from the new.

Meeting The Lord.

We “go out to meet” our Lord, spiritually, in our affections, thoughts and conduct. When the light of truth impresses us, we are to go out from the midnight darkness of sensuous life, to seek conjunction with the Lord, in His truth. The Lord comes to us in spiritual principles; and we “go out to meet Him,” in a life according to those principles. Every truth calls us to “go out to meet” the Lord, in practicing that truth.

Trimming Their Lamps.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.” To arise, spiritually, is to arouse the will to activity. To “trim our lamp,” is to bring our intellect into activity, to make use of our knowledge. The virgins, in arising, represent the men of the Church lifting up their minds to a higher plane of thought. And, in trimming their lamps, they represent the men of the Church setting their intellectual knowledge in order, according to the doctrine of the Church.

Both the wise and the foolish arose, and both trimmed their lamps. So, in the Church, both the sincere and insincere attend the Church, and learn the doctrines. But the two classes soon show

their difference in character. The wise arise to a permanent state of spiritual enlightenment; but the foolish fall away into darkness.

Having No Oil. The foolish virgins found that their lamps had gone out, and that they had no more oil. "Lamps" are the knowledge of truth, the doctrines known to the memory. And the foolish, in the dull slumber and sleep of sensuous life, having no inward love for good and truth, no heavenly oil, found their minds without any element of life, with which to receive new intelligence. During their life in the world, their love of evil had extinguished their intelligence, and had taken away their interest in the truths of heaven.

Evils in the will and falses in the understanding, and sins in the conduct, unfit a man for any genuine intelligence in spiritual things, and for any inward feeling of joyful response to the coming of the Lord. Even evil men have a certain love of acquiring knowledge. But they have no warm love of the truth itself as a spiritual principle of human life. And when the judgment comes, their merely intellectual interest in the doctrines of the church will not feed their minds, nor promote spiritual intelligence.

But, when the light of truth, at the judgment, shows all men the necessity of a love for good and truth, the foolish begin to cast about, to see how they can attain the measure of spiritual manhood.

Asking For Oil.

They say to the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." They seek to trust in the goodness and love which are in others; they rely on a "Vicarious Atonement," and on a "Justification by faith alone." But no man can have genuine faith, unless it be inwardly filled with love to God and to man. The faith which is "alone" is a spurious faith. The blood of Christ is the spiritual truth of the Lord, loved, believed, and practiced. For instance: suppose a dying invalid has healthy blood transfused into his body, from the arm of a healthy man. Is he saved by the blood? Yes; but not by the shedding of the blood; but by the life of the blood; by blood received, made his own, appropriated, used as his own. Only thus can a spiritually dying man be saved by the spiritual blood of Christ, when he receives the Divine Truth into his own heart, and uses it as his own principle of actual life, circulating through his whole mental system. The Refusal. And so the wise answered the foolish, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." No creed, no Church, and no Savior, can give us the oil of love, or goodness, unless, as of ourselves, we go and procure it. A man may teach truth to another, but he cannot give goodness. Goodness, love, must be acquired by every man, for himself. Every man must go to the Lord, to procure goodness, in the daily practice of the Lord's truth. If any man acquires goodness, he must buy it; he must pay for it, by giving up his evils. In the coming of the Lord to the Church, He will find many in the knowledge of doctrine. But those who have knowledge only, will have empty lamps, and no oil of love to keep their knowledge in daily use. And such cannot enter into the marriage-feast; they cannot be in mental states capable of entering into the felicities of conjunction with the Lord; for conjunction with the Lord, which is regeneration, takes place with a man in the degree in which there is formed, in his mind, a spiritual marriage of good in his will and truth in his understanding. When these mental partners are united in the mind, heaven is opened to the mind, and the man enters in to the marriage-supper of the Lord.

Entering In To The Feast.

Those who are ready, or prepared, enter in with the Lord, into a heavenly state; and the door of the mind is shut against all things that are not in condition to enter heaven.

It is so in our individual life. When we are seeking regeneration, there are many worldly desires and ideas of our natural minds, which intrude themselves, and ask to be admitted to our confidence and esteem. Our spiritual minds arise, and look upward; they acknowledge the Lord, and seek his righteousness. And we begin to experience a new quality of life. Love feeds our intelligence; and we use our knowledge for good purposes. But all our merely superficial pride of knowledge, and other intellectual conceits, seek to pass into our regenerating character. But the door is shut against them. They have no capacity for heaven. The door that is shut is in themselves, in their own character; they shut out the heavens.

Thus, the parable teaches us that heaven can be given to those only who are prepared for heaven; i.e., who are heavenly in character. If any others should be admitted among the angels, such angelic company would not seem heavenly, to the evil. For heaven is not merely a place, but a state, or condition. Men fix their character by their lives. And he who lives himself into the character of a devil, cannot live in the atmosphere of heaven.

“I Know You Not.”

Evil men think of a heaven as a desirable place, according to their expectation; and so they may imagine that they desire to be in heaven. But it would not be a heaven to them. And the Lord would say to them, “I know you not;” i.e., He does not know them as having anything heavenly in their character. “The Lord knoweth the way of the upright;” but He does not know, as His, the way of the evil man. Heaven is a condition of love, faith and obedience. And those, only, can enter into a heavenly condition, who have the oil of genuine love, to keep alive their light of intelligence; who know the truth, and love to live by it. “If ye know these things, blessed are ye, if ye do them.” The Lord is said not to know those who, spiritually, do not know the Lord, as their Lord, loved and obeyed. “I know you not;” there is nothing in you that responds to My Divine principles of life. You can not live in heaven, because you are not willing to receive the principles which make heaven. For heaven is a pure state of unselfish love, of innocence, and of spiritual intelligence; and you are in an impure state of selfish affections, of doctrines without goodness, of lamps without oil.

Five. From the fact that there were five wise and five foolish virgins, we are not to infer that exactly half of the world, or of Church members, are saved, and half lost. In the interpretation of a parable, we must remember that the lesson intended is in spiritual principles, not merely in external facts. The Lord's Word treats of spiritual things; and we must draw spiritual inferences from its figurative teachings. The Word does not teach mere natural science, but spiritual science. Its lessons are not about mathematical quantities, but spiritual qualities. The number, five, represents a part, or a few. Numerically, it is probable that much more than half of the human race will be saved. But they will not all be saved in the same degree of heavenly life. There are many degrees of heavenly life. “In My Father's house are many mansions.” But no man will enter into any of the heavenly societies, except as a result of regeneration, that is, of shunning evils as sins, and doing good, in the name of the Lord.

Watching.

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.” And here, again, though the literal sense speaks of times, the spiritual sense treats of qualities, and of states of life. The day and the hour are states of affection and of thought, from our will and understanding. We have need to watch, interiorly and exteriorly; to watch our ends, purposes, motives, in our heart; to watch our mental causes, the principles which are operating in our understandings; and to watch our works, or conduct, to see that they are the embodiment of the commandments of our Lord. In our external life, we are alert and watchful against fire and flood, and against moth and rust, and deadly poisons. And it behooves us to keep spiritual watch against the deadly influence of evils and falsities and sins, which are likely to sap our spiritual strength. We are to watch, not merely against outward foes, but more especially against our own evil inclinations and false notions.

And, in watching, we are not to be governed by natural fear, which paralyzes activity, but by the love which finds its joy in keeping the Lord’s commandments. If we indulge our evils, we can not tell in what hour, or state, of moral and spiritual weakness, we may begin a downward course of life. As the sun, with its heat and light, is in every ray that it sends forth to us, so the Lord is in every truth that makes itself known to us. Such a truth is both our Redeemer and our judge. Our natural mind may not recognize either the Divine influence, or its own dangers. And so, to watch, we must have light. So, in the truth of the Lord’s Word, as taught in the doctrines of the Church, we have lamps of doctrine, which may be filled with the warm oil of a love for the truth, and for the good which the truth teaches; and by these we may clearly see the quality of the things that are within our own natural minds, as well as in our surroundings. “And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

20. The Talents.

The Talents.

(Matthew 25:14-30.) The Law Of Use.

Summary.

Man lives in the use of what the Lord gives him. And the fullness, the quality, and the degree, of each man's spiritual life, is measured by the use which he makes of the Lord's gifts. The Context. In the chapter containing the text, there are two parables and a comparison: "The Ten Virgins," "The Talents," and "The Sheep and the Goats." All of these treat of the judgment, at the coming of the Lord. But these accounts are not mere repetitions'; they are views taken from different stand-points, and showing different aspects of the judgment. The parable of "The Ten Virgins" illustrates the judgment as it acts upon the affections of the people of the Church. The present parable, of "The Talents," displays, more especially, the operation of the judgment upon the understanding of the man of the Church. And the account of "The Sheep and the Goats" exhibits the effects of the Lord's coming and judgment upon the deeds of men. Thus, in the three accounts, the three departments of man's life are covered, the will, the understanding, and the action. In Luke 19, there is the parable of "The Pounds," which, though not identical with the parable of "The Talents," so greatly resembles it in essential features, that an understanding of the spirit and purpose of either of these parables will enable the reader to comprehend the other. The Literal Sense. In the common translation, the fourteenth verse reads thus, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling," etc. And the words "the kingdom of heaven is" are in italics, to indicate that no such words are found in the Greek original, but that they have been supplied by the translators, to complete the supposed sense. This form is used, probably, because many of the parables begin with words about the kingdom of heaven. But our text follows the account of "The Ten Virgins;" thus: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. For, as a man travelling," etc. And the sense must be that "the Son of Man is as a man travelling," etc. The Man Travelling. The "man" is the Lord, Jesus Christ, who, as the one God of heaven and earth, gives to men all that they have. But when the Lord has given to men all necessary knowledge of truth, He permits them to apply these knowledge, in their daily life, and as if they could do so by themselves, and in their own power. The Lord seems to put these things in men's minds, and then to go away-, and leave men to work out their own salvation. The Lord does not go away; but it so appears to the man, In the little practical details of everyday natural life, the man has no sensation of the Lord's presence. If it were not so, the natural man would not feel himself to be in freedom.

Practically, it is the man who goes away from the Lord, because the man, having communed with the Lord, in the understanding of principles, goes out into the sensuous life of the world, to apply his knowledge. But it seems, to him, that the Lord has gone away, to a "far country," because the man's sensuous life is far removed from the interior life, in which he sees the Lord's influence and presence. The Servants. The "man travelling" called his "servants." These servants are all who are

in the Church, all who profess to serve the Lord. In fact, all men ought to regard themselves as His servants. The Talents.

Riches are means of procuring necessary things. The “talents” represent the knowledge of truth and of good, held in the man’s memory, ready to be used in procuring truth and good, as living principles of the heart and life. “Knowledge is power.” So, by means of knowledge, man is able to know and distinguish good from evil, and truth from falsity, and holiness from sin. The accumulations of things known are called knowledge. These are the mental “talents,” or riches of the mind. The Lord gives these “knowledge” to men, through various means; and He also gives to every man a faculty of perceiving the truths which are in the knowledge. And, if the man loves the Lord, and obeys Him, he will see the truth, as truth, and will know it to be true. But indifference to truth, and opposition to good, and indulgence in evil and falsity, will blind the man’s mind to the light of truth. And then, though the man may have knowledge of truth and good, he will not apply them to his daily life, and will not receive any spiritual benefit from them. The Common Moral.

Indirectly, we may draw the common moral from the text, and say that all our abilities and possessions, of all kinds, are entrusted to us, by our Lord, for daily use, in serving Him, in a good, true, useful life; i.e., in performing uses. For serving the Lord is not merely in external worship, but principally in living a life of uses. He who serves the Lord, is he who lives on the principles which the Lord teaches, and whose whole life is a service of the Lord, in uses. The “services” of the Church are merely means of bringing men into condition of heart to serve the Lord in their practical life. But, in the exact meaning, the “talents” are our knowledge, all that we know about good and truth.

Numbers.

It is said that the lord “gave five talents to one servant; to another, two, and to another, one; to every man according to his several ability.” Literally, numbers express quantity; but, spiritually, they represent differences in quality, or character. In the parables, numbers are used symbolically, not mathematically. For the parables, like every other part of the Lord’s Word, have an inward, spiritual meaning, treating of spiritual principles, and their application to practical life.

Divine Giving.

We are not to suppose that the Lord, intentionally and arbitrarily, gives men the knowledge of truth in different quantities, or in different degrees. The differences are in the men, themselves. The Lord gives, as the text says, “to every man according to his several ability;” i.e., his ability to receive knowledge. And his ability depends upon his willingness and his efforts.

Thus, each man practically determines for himself both the quantity and the quality of his spiritual knowledge. The Lord would give all the blessings of heaven to every man, if the man would receive them. So Jesus said, “Ye would not come unto Me, that ye might have life.” And so the Lord can actually give into each man only what the man will take. The three numbers represent the three classes of men, in the external Church. All in the Church receive some knowledge, by instruction. But their states of reception are very different.

Five. The number five, as a symbol, denotes a few, or some. It is half of ten, which represents completeness, as ten fingers, ten commandments, etc. There were five loaves, from which Jesus

once fed the multitude. David took five smooth stones, when he went to fight with Goliath. The pool of Bethesda had five porches. He who had five talents given to him, represents a state of mind in which there is some knowledge of heavenly things, a few knowledge of good and truth, which the man may use, in daily life.

Two.

Two, as a symbol, represents the joining of one with another; i.e., conjunction, or union. It refers, especially, to the conjunction of affection and thought, of love and faith, of good and truth. The man to whom two talents were given, represents the state of mind in which the knowledge of truth is united to the love of truth.

One. But the number one, when used in opposition to two, means a state of disjunction. Thus, the man with one talent represents a state of mind in which there is knowledge, but knowledge only, and no love of truth.

Five, Two And One. In one sense, the five talents represent knowledge stored up in the mind, from infancy, as a few "remains," or states of good and truth imparted to the child, by the Lord, and laid up, within him, for his future use. And, in this connection, the two talents represent the knowledge received by instruction, in later childhood, and united with a love of truth, by regeneration. And the one talent represents knowledge acquired in youth and manhood, and laid up in the memory only, and not joined with any love of good and truth.

Trading. The man who received five talents, "went and traded" with them, and gained "other five talents." And the man with two talents traded with his, and doubled them. Buying and selling represent procuring knowledge of good and truth, and teaching them. Thus, trading with the talents means increasing them, by using them. Knowledge, properly put to good use, makes more knowledge. This is the case with both those who have five talents, or a few knowledge, and those who have two talents, or who join their knowledge to the love of truth and good.

Went.

It is said the man "went and traded;" i.e., he went out into the things of daily life, and there used and applied his knowledge. And such application increased his knowledge, by practice.

Doubling The Talents.

Each wise man doubled his number of talents; for each traded with what he had, and made as much more as he began with. Thus, the use of our knowledge doubles them, by application; i.e., we apply them, in practical deeds of natural life; and, to the same extent, they return to us an exact equivalent -in spiritual life. From natural, they become spiritual. They are doubled, in quality; because, as we use them in our natural life, they are opened to us, as new things, on the spiritual side of our life, also. And there is no other way to attain the spiritual life of any truth, than to, practice the same truth in its natural form, and in our natural life. And they are doubled in another sense; i.e., they are put forth from our understanding, and then elevated more fully into our will, in the conjunction of our knowledge with our affections.

Digging, Hiding, Etc.

“But he who had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.” He who has knowledge of truth, without love of truth and good, does not put his knowledge to practical good use. To dig, or search into the earth, means to study, to investigate, to try to get at the facts of knowledge, as facts. To hide the talent is to make no use of it. The Earth. The earth represents our natural mind. To hide the talent in the earth, is to immerse our knowledge in the things of our outward, sensuous life; to use them for low and external motives, such as mere pleasure, or reputation, or selfish influence. Then, though we have the form of truth, in our knowledge, we have neither its spirit nor its use. We may have a kind of outward faith, but it will be “faith alone,” without love, and without good fruits. And “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

Times.

“After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.” Times represent states, or conditions of life. When each man’s state is ripe for judgment, the Lord comes to him; not as a matter of punishment, but as fruit becomes ripe, and comes to seed, by filling the measure of its growth. So, when a man’s character is formed, the judgment comes, because the man lives himself into a state of judgment. The judgment ascribes to each man the character which he has formed for himself. What he has made, he can keep. If he makes nothing of spiritual character, he receives nothing; and he loses even the knowledge of truth and good which he had, but would not use. The Coming Of The Lord.

Each man brings his gains to the lord, and acknowledge them to be the lord’s. So, every regenerate man acknowledge the Lord as his Master. Having used his knowledge, and procured genuine wisdom and intelligence, he acknowledge his indebtedness to the Lord, for all that he has. He has doubled his talents; they are no longer natural, only, but spiritual, also. The Commendation. The lord commends the servant, as “good and faithful;” i.e., good, in the will, or heart, and faithful in the understanding, and in the conduct. “Well done,” is the approval of the Lord, communicated to the man’s conscience. The man, by being faithful in the few things seen in this world, develops a disposition to love good. And then the spiritual part of his mind is opened, and he obtains control over the many passions and thoughts of his natural mind. The natural idea is, that a man, though in humble circumstances, in this world, shall be exalted, in the next world, to a position of honor and power. But the spiritual sense rises high above this selfish idea, and shows that, in regeneration, the man shall be exalted to a state of mind in which he shall have power over himself, his interiors controlling his exteriors. This is a far greater promise.

Entering Into Joy.

“Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Literally, this expression seems to refer to the Oriental custom of making a grand feast, at the return of the lord, or master, from a journey; and of inviting to the feast, those servants who had been faithful to their master’s interests. In such cases, bond-servants were sometimes given their freedom, and placed in authority, to rule over others.

But, spiritually, to enter into the joy of our Lord, is to enter into conjunction with our Lord, by love and obedience, and thus to receive from our Lord the elements of heavenly joy, the joy of loving good and of doing good. Then, in our daily life, every natural affection will be inwardly filled with the inexpressible joy of spiritual affection. A Hard Man.

Even the man with one talent, though he does not put that talent to any good use, acknowledge it to be the lord's. But he calls the lord a "hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed." Faith alone, or knowledge alone, without love, brings no increase, and gives no spiritual joy. Not coming into conjunction with the Lord, the unregenerate natural man does not comprehend the Lord's character.

Those who experience the warmth of love to the Lord, know His love, and love to work in His service. They know, by experience, the truth of His saying, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." But men who will not receive good from the Lord, regard Him as hard and unfair, demanding that men shall love good, and do good, when, as they say, He did not give them any love for good and truth. They say He is demanding to gather a harvest from men, without having sown any seed of good and truth in them. The man who hid his one talent did not seem to think he had done anything wrong. He rather seemed to charge the lord with wrong-doing. Evil men think the Lord to be hard, because they see that He is opposed to their evils; and because their character is opposed to His character. It is a hardship to them, to be asked to do good. They do not believe in the Divine providence. They boast that they have kept the letter of the law; and then they confidently say to the Lord, "We return to you the talent you gave us. Here you have what belongs to you." Their fear is natural and sensuous fear. They have procured knowledge from the letter of the Word; but they have not examined themselves, to see their own evils, and to avoid sins.

But, as the master replied to the servant, if a man thinks the Lord to be hard and severe, this is increased reason why the man should put his talent, his knowledge, to practical use. The Lord requires use, even from the natural man. Even if he worked for reward, he should have done the good, to get the reward.

Wicked And Slothful. This servant was addressed as a "wicked and slothful servant;" i.e., one who is both false in thought, and evil in will. He should have put the talent "to the exchangers;" i.e., he should have brought his knowledge to his rational thought, which, under the Lord's guidance, would have added spiritual knowledge to his outward knowledge. Then he would have acknowledged the Lord, both naturally and spiritually, in a good and joyful life.

But, by making no good use of his knowledge, he has not made it a part of his mind. And, entering the spiritual world, he will not desire any knowledge of good and truth; and, hence, he will reject from his mind, even the form of knowledge. Not being grounded in his will, or in his conduct, it will not be in his character.

Character.

Every man, by his will and his life, procures to himself a certain quality of character, He has a certain measure of willingness to receive good and truth, or evil and falsity. This measure is his own. In the other life, he will fill it up to its fullness. If, here, he makes no use of truth known, he will drop it even from his memory, in the other world. Such knowledge of good and truth would be against his ruling- love, and, hence, he would reject them.

Giving To Those Who Have. But the knowledge of evil men may be of use to good men, because evil men can teach these knowledge. Thus they can be given to those who have ten talents, even though spiritually taken from evil men. "Unto every one that hath, shall be given," because the disposition to acquire knowledge, from love of good and of truth, fits the man to grow more and

more able to receive heavenly things. And a man carries into the spiritual world all knowledge of good and truth which he has, while in this world, put to good use. Faith with love is like light with heat, in summer, when vegetation grows and flourishes; but faith without love is like light without heat, in winter, when vegetation dies.

Thus, a man receives intelligence and wisdom according to the quantity and quality of his love for good and truth. And, if he has not acquired such love, then, in the next world, his own character will take away even that knowledge which he superficially had, on earth; or, as it is said in Luke, "from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have;" for he does not really and inwardly have it.

Outer Darkness.

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The literal reference is to the servants shut out from the feast, on the return of the master. But, spiritually, the darkness is in the man's own mind, the falsity which shuts out truth. Darkness may be ignorance of truth; but outer darkness is rejection of truth. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." Evil men "love [spiritual] darkness, their deeds being evil."

Weeping, And Gnashing Of Teeth.

Weeping is the sorrow induced by the rejection of good and truth. Gnashing of teeth is the clashing of false principles against the truth. Evil men, confirmed in false principles, would delight to destroy all good and true things, if possible, like a chained and angry dog, gnashing his teeth in impotent rage. The teeth, used to prepare food for the stomach, represent the external, sensuous thought, which prepares various things for mental digestion. Sensuous men do not see truth, as truth, but dispute about it. Such disputes have raged in the churches, when theology was discussed by men who had no insight into spiritual truth. Such disputes are going on in the hells. Representatively, they are called the "gnashing of teeth."

Spiritual Life In Natural Life. This parable teaches us that spiritual life is not separated from natural life, but within it, as the soul within the body. And our spiritual life is to be built up, in and by a good natural life, applying known truths to our conduct. And we sin not only by what we do that is wrong, but also by what we fail to do, of right and good things. We have no spiritual light, no knowledge, that we can not use, if we will. And our failure to use it, will result in our loss of it, and of its possible blessing.

Men are different, in mind and in education. And we cannot avoid such differences; nor are we necessarily responsible for them. We are not responsible for our inherited capacities, but for our use of them. And use will greatly increase and open our capacities. There will be, in heaven, a home for every sincere man, who will make good use of his capacities, and of his knowledge, in shunning evil, and in doing good; and that home will be a heavenly home to him, the kind of a home which he personally desires and needs. In the New-Church, much has been given to us, in the knowledge of the spiritual sense of the Lord's Word, as well as in the letter; and it behooves us to watch our mental states, and to avoid parading our knowledge, without putting them to practical use, in regeneration. And, especially, it behooves us to avoid feeling contempt for others, who, though they have not our quantity of knowledge, may have a much better quality of love for good and truth, and more beautiful and useful lives.

21. Mark

Mark

22. The Seed Growing Secretly.

The Seed Growing Secretly.

(Mark 4:26-29.) Secrecy Of Divine Operation. The Kingdom Of God. The kingdom of God is that condition of man's mind, in which the Lord rules, by His good and truth, His love and wisdom. Wherever this condition exists, there is the kingdom of God established. "The kingdom of God is within you." This kingdom of God is formed in man, by implanting in his mind the truths of the Lord's Word. The Seed. The seed is truth. And every seed of truth carries within it the vitality of good. This vitality causes the seed of truth to sprout, and to spring up, into something living, wherever the conditions of growth are present. Heaven is implanted in all men who receive truth and good; i.e., who receive truth into good ground, into a natural will disposed to love the truth. The ground represents the man's own mind, whose condition is according to the state of his ruling love. A seed grows, because, as a vessel, it is capable of receiving and using the inflowing life of the Lord. So it is with the human mind: according to the state of his mind, as a vessel, each man receives one or another degree and quality of human life. The Sower. The sower, here, is the man, himself, In some of the parables, the sower represents the Lord, because the Lord's part of the work is there treated of; but, in this parable, the man's part of the work is brought into contrast with the Lord's part. It is the man's part to prepare the ground, to sow the seed, and to reap the harvest. And it is the Lord's part to give the secret growth of the seed, as well as to supply the conditions, and to sustain the man in his labor. It can not be said that the Lord sleeps, nor that He does not know how the seed grows.

Planting,Etc.

Casting the seed into the ground here represents the man's work of learning truth, from the Lord's Word, and implanting it in his mind. The springing up of the seed is the reception and operation of the truth in the man's understanding; and the growing is its reception and operation in his will.

Secret Work Of Regeneration. The regeneration of the man is accomplished while he is unconscious of its operation and progress. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit:" that is, the operation of the Lord's spirit is known by its results; but the steps of its progress do not come to a man's consciousness.

Sleeping And Rising,Etc.

Sleeping and waking, or rising, and night and day, represent certain states of mind. When a man is in the clear light of truth, and his mind is elevated to see in that light, it is day-time, or daylight, in his mind and life. But when truths are not clear to him, but rather obscure, and he is mentally in the dark, then it is night, in his mental experience. When his mind is active in the light of spiritual truth, he is said to be awake, and to arise, and to go forth to perform uses. But, when he relapses into merely sensuous, natural thoughts and feelings, and loses sight of great spiritual principles, he is said to fall asleep. Thus, briefly, to be asleep is to be in a natural-minded state, and to arise, or be

awake, is to be in a spiritual-minded state.

Alternation.

Now, in the course of a man's life, he alternates between these two states, to a greater or less extent. At times, his mind is open to spiritual light, and spiritual things seem clear and certain. These are times of seeing truths. And these states must be followed by states of doing the truth, in practical things, when the man must come down into the everyday common affairs of life, and carry out his principles. As he practices the truth, he becomes fitted to receive more truth. And so his life alternates between seasons of exaltation and instruction, and seasons of coming down and embodying instruction in his daily life. A man could not be always in a state of exaltation into the light, because he needs the seasons of application, at each stage of progress. By application of known truth, he brings his heart and life up to the measure of the truth that he knows. And, having advanced a step, that new step enables him to make another advance into the light of truth.

Thus, each truth, known and practiced, develops its corresponding good; and each good developed, leads to further truth. Thus, by alternating between arising and sleeping, a man is instructed, step by step, and also enabled to ultimate his principles, and to fix and confirm them in his practical daily life.

Unconscious Changes.

If a man merely sees the truth, he becomes a theorizer, only; and if he does not see the truth, he becomes a sensuous man. Regeneration goes on, in the man, while he does good, according to the truth that he knows. And this practice of truth works a change in the man, unconsciously to himself. He experiences the change, when it comes; but he does not recognize its operation, in its coming. For the Lord inwardly leads man by love, and flows into his love, in his will. And, from the will, the Lord influences the man's understanding. The more the man is willing to love good, the more he is disposed to see, and to consider, the truth. And a man does not have anything further than a general sensation of what flows into his love, with its affections. But he has a manifest sensation of what flows into his understanding, because this takes definite form in his thought.

Secresy Necessary.

We can see that a man must receive good into his will secretly, because the Lord must lead the man to reconstruct his whole character. The natural man is in a disorderly mental condition; and he regards his own evils as good and delightful. But the Lord desires to lead the man out of disorder, and into an orderly condition, in which he will hate evil and love good. But the man will not willingly oppose himself, at the Lord's bidding, because he would thus feel himself to be forced by another person. But the Lord permits it to appear to the man that he leads himself, and that he makes changes in his character of his own accord. Then the man feels free, because, in his outward thought, he thinks he is compelling himself, and is not forced by another.

Thus, the Lord secretly implants in the man, as far as possible, a disposition to love good, and to seek a change of character. And so the man goes on, and cultivates good affections and true thoughts, without seeing or knowing just how these things are brought about.

Illustrations.

It is not necessary to the farmer to know how seeds grow. If he does his part, preparing the ground, planting the seed, and attending to the conditions of growth, so far as they come under his knowledge and ability, and reaping, and caring for the harvest, he can eat the bread, as the result of the growth of the seed. And so, if a man will learn the truth, and do all that lies in his power to care for the growth of the truth in his mind, attending to the necessary conditions of growth, so far as they fall within his ability, he will secure the practical result of the growth of the truth in his mind and life, even when he does not know just how the Lord makes the implanted truth to sprout and grow to its harvest of practical good.

So, in our physical life, we eat our food, and the food undergoes various operations, until it is digested, assimilated, and converted into blood, etc. But we have no manifest perception or sensation of what is going on within our bodies, during these operations. Yet we live, and secure the results of these operations, without knowing their methods and stages of progress.

So, in spiritual life, the Lord carries on many of our mental operations, without our knowledge. As the farmer plants his seed, and sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed springs up, and grows, he knows not how; so we learn the truth, and do our work, now in a spiritual state of mind, and now in a natural state; and yet an inward growth is going on, unperceived by us, yet operated by our ever- watchful Lord of love.

Guardian Angels. The Lord leads and teaches man, through the means of angels and spirits. But the man does not see these ministering spirits, and, generally, has no sensation of their presence about him, nor of his intimate association with them.

It is a law of the Divine Providence that a man should not, from any sensation in himself, see how good and truth flow in to him, from the Lord, nor how evil and falsity flow into him from the hells. Nor should he see how the Divine Providence secretly operates, within him, in favor of good, and against evil; because, if he saw these things, he would not feel free, and would not be able to act freely, as of himself, according to his reason.

It is enough, if he knows and acknowledge these things, as spiritual principles of human life, taught in the doctrines of the Church, from the Lord's Word. It would not be helpful to him, to know these things by outward sense, because, then, he would so act as to counteract their good influence.

Illustration.

We can easily imagine how it would be, with us, if we had not only to eat our food, but also to superintend all the processes which the food undergoes, from the eating to the distribution of its chemical elements to their appropriate places in our bodies. And it would be correspondingly hard for us to have to superintend all the inward operations of the Divine Providence, by which our mental food is carried through spiritual digestion, assimilation, and distribution throughout the various planes, degrees and departments of our minds.

Seen In Its Results.

But, while the Lord's operations within our minds are not plainly seen, as to their methods and steps of progress, yet their finished work is very plainly manifested. When the harvest comes, we see it and know it. When the man is regenerate, then he knows the fact that the Lord has led him through many steps of gradual growth. And, then, he does not oppose the Lord's leading.

Illustration.

Now, while the farmer cannot produce growth of the seed, and does not know just how the seed grows, yet there is much that he can know and do. He can study the science and art of planting. He can learn to distinguish good seed from poor seed, and one kind of seed from another. He can prepare the land, and care for it; gathering up the weeds and stones, and keeping the fences in order. And so, if he does not harvest a good crop, there may be many things that were the sower's fault.

And, spiritually, there are many things that we can do, both in putting forth our own abilities, as of ourselves, and in preparing our minds to receive the Divine truth, and the continued influences of the Lord, through His guardian-angels, operating to produce growth in the truth, in our minds. And our failures to receive the results of such growth are our own fault, to the extent in which we have left our part of the work undone.

It is enough for a man to know how to do his part, and to do it; i.e., to keep the Lord's commandments, shunning evil and doing good. It is useful and delightful to attain great intellectual knowledge of spiritual things; for "Knowledge is power." But power is not of any use until it is applied. And so, all our intellectual knowledge is of no practical use, except in its actual application to shunning evil and doing good.

Co-Operation.

We must not expect the Lord to come to us, and, with irresistible influence, fill us with good, and expel our evils. In so far as we are willing to apply our good and truth, in our daily life, our Lord will make them grow, within us: i.e., He will enlarge our love of good and truth, and our capacity to receive good and truth from Him. As we go on, as of ourselves, learning and practicing the truth, He will carry on within us, secretly, but surely, all His wonderful works. The Earth Bringing Forth.

Yet, practically it seems to the man, that he does, of himself, all that is done. "For the earth bringeth forth of herself." This is the appearance. But it is not the actual fact, even literally. For the earth does not act, but is acted upon. Heat, light, the atmosphere, electricity, and other things, operate upon the earth, according to its condition. So, the natural mind of man, which is signified by the earth, seems to bring forth of itself; and yet it does not do so; but it is acted upon, by various influences from the Lord. The vitality is not in the earth, but in the seed. So, the mind of man does not bring forth of itself. The vital energy is not in man, but in the seed of truth, from the Lord. But the man's mind, like the ground, must have the necessary conditions ready. The Gradual Growth. The seed springs up, and grows, "first, the blade, then the ear; after, that, the full corn in the ear." A man first receives the truth as an idea, a mere sprout, or little blade. He thinks the idea is his own. Then he has received the truth as mere science, or knowledge, deposited in his memory. Afterwards, he sees the truth as a principle; and it is then a truth of faith, which he believes. But his natural thought is not yet in agreement with the truth. The corn is beginning to form, in the ear; but it is not yet ready for use. Afterwards, the man sees the truth in its practical aspect, as something good, which he can do. Then it is a truth of life, the full corn in the ear, ready for practical use. And when it is used, it becomes the good of life, in acts of charity, or love to the neighbor.

Thus, the man's mind grows, and the truth grows, with him, and within him. The truth first enters into his memory; then into his understanding; then into his will. And this growth proceeds, as the man keeps the commandments in his natural life, from a principle of obedience to the truth of the Lord.

Varieties Of Reception.

Men receive the truth differently, because the men, themselves, are different. All through a man's life, if he is regenerating, he is receiving more and more of truth. And the manner in which each man receives new truth is according to the state of his mind. In all men, good is implanted by means of truth. In celestial men, characterized by the love of good, and who are highly regenerate, good is implanted by truths; but truths do not stop in the memory, to be pondered over, nor in the understanding, to be reasoned about; but they pass at once into the will, the heart, which is in condition to receive them, and to apply them at once to life, in practical good.

But, with the spiritual man, (characterized by the love of truth, rather than by the love of good) truths pass into the understanding, where they are subjected to reason, and gradually adopted as principles of faith. Thus a conscience (conscience, science with the man) is built up, in the spiritual man, from which he battles against evil and falsity. But the celestial man, receiving everything as practical good, is not governed by science, like the natural man, nor by conscience like the spiritual man., He is not governed merely by a known standard of right, but by a love of right, a delight in good, from which he is in the perception of good and of truth, which increases as his love increases. The Sickle.

"But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." The sickle, as a sharp knife, separating the grain from the stubble, represents the truth, especially the letter of the Lord's Word, in its capacity of cutting apart, or separating, essentials from non-essential things, and of distinguishing good from evil. The grain is cut for use. And the threshing follows the cutting. So, in our minds, armed with the truths of the letter of the Divine Word, especially the Ten Commandments, we cut apart, or separate, truths from appearances; and, by rational thought, we mentally thresh out the practical good, for daily use. The Harvest. As the harvest is the good for which the farmer works, from the preparation of the ground, and through the planting, weeding, etc.; so, in the Lord's Providence, the practical good of life is the end in view, through all the operations and leadings of the Lord. And as the farmer, at each stage of his work, rejoices to see things moving on, in the right way, towards the harvest, so the Lord and His angels rejoice to see our minds attaining, at each stage of progress, a good and orderly condition, preparing for the harvest to come. So we rejoice to see our children progressing in an orderly way, towards regeneration. At each step, we rejoice to see the ground ready for the seed of truth, and bringing the seed on towards maturity and harvest. So, our Lord and His angels are watching us, rejoicing to see us shunning evil and doing good. They delight in every good impulse of our love, every true thought, and every useful deed. They are doing all they can, to lead us to wisdom, and to turn us away from folly.

Doing Our Part. But we must do our part, planting the seed, or learning the truth, and gathering the ripened grain in the harvest of practical good, in the daily life of love and usefulness. And we must make the bread, and eat it. We must make the good our own, or we do not fix it in our manhood. There is much that we cannot do, and which our Lord does for us, in the secret recesses of our

hearts. And for these things we must trust, as the farmer trusts for the growth of the planted seed. "The secret things belong unto the Lord, our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children, for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." But there is much that we can do; and for this we are responsible. We can shun evils, in our affections, in our thoughts, and in our conduct.

Spiritual And Natural States. A practical point arises just here: we need not worry ourselves because we are not always in a profound and spiritual state of mind. It is not so intended. This is the radical mistake of the hermit, who seeks to rise above the world, by flying from it. But the Lord intended us to learn the truth, and to put that truth into practice, in the world. He intended us to sleep and rise, night and day; i.e., to alternate between natural and spiritual states, so that we can learn the truth, in our more exalted states, and practice it in our natural states.

But, while we can not be always in a spiritual state, but must often be in natural states, we shall never need to be in evil natural states. The real danger does not arise from the world outside of us, but from the world within us. Thus, we recognize the great practical importance of learning simply to go on, in a good natural life, keeping the commandments, without worry, without display, and without fear; not seeking ambitiously, to do some great thing, but contented to do the plain, simple things of a quiet and useful life; knowing that, in all these things, the Lord is bringing to harvest every truth that we carry into our practical life.

Encouragement. And this should be an encouraging thought, to us, because we can all do these things. We are not required to have great natural intellects, or learning, or riches, or social position, or beauty, or fine clothing, or any other merely natural conditions; but we are all required to keep the commandments, shunning evil, and doing good. And when we do this, our Lord is giving us an inward growth which shall, in the world to come, make all our conditions and surroundings in keeping with our character, and, hence, with all our unselfish longings and aspirations. This world is but the school-house, and the world to come is the real life. Very few externals are essential to a truly happy life on earth. And no abundance of externals will produce happiness, in the mind which has not attained the elements of regenerate spiritual life. Our Children. The parable suggests our duty to our children, to bring them up for the spiritual world, and not merely for the natural world; to teach them genuine truth; and to set them a good example; to prepare their minds for the Lord's work of regeneration; remembering that, while the growth of the seed is secret, so its failure to grow is secret. We must not infer that, because we can not see what is going on in our own mind, or our child's mind, therefore it must be doing well. It may be doing very badly. The seeds of evil weeds may be secretly growing underneath the surface. Under a smooth exterior, there may be very bad conditions. That depends upon whether we have well prepared the ground, planted good and well-selected seed, kept out the weeds and stones, kept the necessary fences in good order; and, in all other things, have done our part, wisely and well. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye, if ye do them."

23. Luke

Luke

24. Old and New Cloth, Wine and Bottles.

Old and New Cloth, Wine and Bottles.

(Luke 5:36-39.) New Doctrines Needed For New Truths.

Summary.

Truth must be expressed in doctrine. And every truth requires an appropriate doctrine to contain it. New truths can not be fully contained and exhibited in and by old doctrine. Therefore, for new truth we must have new doctrine.

And, as doctrine teaches men how to live, every new quality of life is accompanied by a new doctrine. For a new kind of life requires new thought, new feelings and new habits. The man who remains in the old way of thinking and of feeling, does not see why there should be a new way of living. And hence he does not see the need of new habits. But a new life includes a new internal and a new external.

These principles are involved in the circumstances of the parable. The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "Why do the disciples of John fast, often, and make prayers; and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but Thine eat and drink?"

New And Old Ways. And the parable gives the reason why the disciples of Jesus should have different habits from those of the disciples of the Pharisees. The Pharisees lived in the spirit of the old Jewish dispensation. Their feelings, their thoughts and their habits, were of the character of the dispensation in which they lived. And John the Baptist came to warn, rather than to teach new truth; and so his disciples were not prepared to assume new forms of worship. But Jesus came to introduce a new dispensation of life; to teach new truth; to bring a judgment upon the old dispensation; and to make a radical change in men's ways of feeling, thinking and acting. And, naturally, His disciples would change their ways of acting, as a part of their change of character.

Dispensations Differ.

Each dispensation of life, among men, has been a re-adjustment of human life, accommodated to the spiritual needs of men. As men declined to lower states of character, the infinite love of the Lord followed them down, and re-adjusted their conditions, to guard them, as far as possible, from the bad results of their own evils; and, at the same time, to keep them open to heavenly blessings, as far as their states of character would permit.

Each dispensation of the Church has thus been an adjustment of all things about men to the character of their ruling-love. Each dispensation has had its own phase of life, its own quality of character. Men in different dispensations, have been different kinds of men; different in their inward quality of character, and different in the outward ways and habits, which embody and express the character.

Retrograding. In each dispensation, as men retrograded, from higher to lower conditions of spiritual life, a new dispensation was rendered necessary, because men had lost some of the characteristic qualities of the previous dispensations. Because men became different in their central principles, they became different in their outward ways of life. And, having grown to be different, different phases of spiritual influences were adapted to their spiritual needs. When men sank below the appreciation of the higher forms of the Divine Love, that infinitely tender Love came to them in lower, or more external forms, such as they could then comprehend. The Coming Of The Lord.

And, when men had stunk to the lowest possible condition in which human life could be preserved, the Divine Love came to them, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, to save them from impending destruction, and to open their minds to the appreciation of heavenly life. The Ascent.

Then, under the guidance of the Divine Love, began the ascent of the human race, towards the higher conditions it had formerly lost. As men began to outgrow the characteristic quality of the existing dispensation, and the conditions were ready for a new step upward, to a higher phase of life, a new dispensation was introduced.

Separating The Old And The New.

And, at every such change, the men who were still imbued with the old spirit and quality of the existing dispensation, and satisfied with its life, failed to comprehend either the need, or the quality, of the new dispensation. And, as the new feelings and new thoughts of the new dispensation necessarily manifested themselves in new ways of life, the men remaining in the old dispensation judged of the new things from the old standards; and, from the old stand-points, they naturally regarded the evidences of new, life as dangerous innovations, and sinful departures from the good old ways. The Lord's Second Coming.

Such was the condition of things at the first coining of the Lord, Jesus Christ; and such is, to-day, the condition, at the second coming of the Lord, in a new dispensation of spiritual life and light. For the Second Coining of the Lord is not :in outward and bodily coming, but an inward and spiritual coining to the hearts and understandings of men, to give them a new quality of inward and outward life. And this coining has already begun. The Old Misunderstands The New. The old condition never understands the new, because the old is not prepared to become the new. The new is a step beyond the old; a new phase of life; a different level of existence; a radical change in the characteristic quality of the life. And the old, not understanding the new, necessarily misjudges the new. But the new, having outgrown the old, comprehends its own past conditions, and realizes the change; as the man born blind cannot comprehend the conditions of the seeing eye, except by experiencing the change in his own person, when his eyes are opened to sight,

Garments.

“No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old.”

Garments, clothing and protecting the man, represent truths, which spiritually clothe and protect our good affections. A good impulse, without the protection afforded by an intelligent knowledge of truth, often leads to trouble, being misdirected. And because of the symbolic signification of garments, so much is said about them, in the Word of the Lord. When it is said to Jerusalem, “Put

oil thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city," the Church, as the spiritual Jerusalem, is told to array herself in the beautiful truths of the Word of the Lord; and to teach these truths, that they may beautify men's lives. And the habit of arraying ourselves in our best garments, on occasions of worship, and in times of social gladness, represents the mental habit of clothing our minds in the truths of the Word, when we approach the Lord and when we exhibit our gladness for the blessings He has given us. The garments of the priests, in the Jewish worship, were regulated by the Lord, to represent His regulation of the truths which shall clothe our affections, in their different experiences. The pure white garments, which are mentioned in the Revelation, as clothing the redeemed in the spiritual world, represent the pure truths which, by practice, purify men's lives.

Garments Representative. In the old Jewish dispensation, which was representative of spiritual things, the clothing was so regulated as to be appropriate to the conditions of the man, or to his representative character. So, in the spiritual life of the new dispensation, in the Christian Church, every where, the truths that clothe men's minds are the appropriate garments of the intellect, accompanying the corresponding conditions of the affections. And even to-day, in our social customs, a person's garments often indicate his condition, occupation, official station, etc. And, spiritually, a man's mental clothing, the truths in which he clothes his mind, indicate his spiritual condition, and the quality of his life. The Psalmist sings, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul,. . . who covereth Himself with light, as with a garment;" i.e., who displays His character in the light of truth. The believing woman was healed by touching the Lord's garment, to represent the cleansing of our affections, by contact with the truth of the Lord's Word, which regulates our conduct.

Angels were often seen in shining garments. And it is the bright truth which shows us the angelic conditions of human life. And, at the transfiguration of Jesus, His garments were white and brilliant. The letter of the Word is as an outer garment, to protect its inward, spiritual sense.

New And Old Garments.

Garments, then, represent truths, which clothe the mind. Old garments, in need of repair, represent old phases of truth, not in good spiritual order, in the minds of men; old conditions of thought. New garments represent new truths, new phases of truth, new ways of thinking. The literal sense of the Word, as seen by the merely natural mind of man, is, in some respects, an old garment, outgrown and Put away, by the man who sees the inward spirit of the Word, and who, from the perception of the spirit of truth, intelligently sees and understands the now illuminated letter of the Scriptures.

Spiritual Garments. The parable illustrates the need of adjusting our doctrine to Our spiritual growth. "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon in old;" no man spiritually does so: no man, having Outgrown old phases of truth, can rationally expect to make these old ideas serve him in his new Conditions, by merely patching them with a few new ideas. New conditions need new truths, suitable to the changed states of the mind.

Patching Old Garments.

If we try to patch up our old beliefs, by putting upon them a little of the new light, we do not succeed; for "the new truth, like new cloth, is elastic, and the old truth, like old cloth, cannot bear the strain of use; and it tears, "And the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the

old;" there is no harmony between the old views and the new. The Wine. The same general principle is taught in the second part of the text: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles," etc.

Wine corresponds to spiritual truth. For this reason, wine is used in the Lord's Supper, to represent the reception of spiritual truth from our Lord. In the Scriptures, much is said of wine, and with the inward meaning of spiritual truth, except when the wine is mentioned as bad wine, and then it represents truth perverted and falsified, corrupted in quality.

Bottles.

"Bottles," as vessels to contain wine, represent doctrines, which hold and contain the truth. Doctrine is necessary, in order to understand the truth; to keep the truth in condition to be used. The bottles mentioned in the text were made of the skins of kids and goats. And, in fact, in the new version of the New Testament, they are called "wineskins," instead of bottles.

These wine-skins, or bottles, when new, were elastic. When new wine was placed in them, the fermentation of the wine expanded them. But, when they were old, they were hard, and had lost their elasticity. If new wine were then put in them, the fermentation of the wine would burst them; and the wine would be spilled, and the bottles would be torn. In the parable, old bottles represent old doctrines, old ways of thinking, and old mental conditions. And new bottles represent new doctrines, doctrines adapted to new conditions of mind, teachings of the new states of the Church. The doctrines of Judaism were old bottles, Which could not hold the new wine of the Christian dispensation. And to-day, the doctrines of the First Christian Church, obscure and irrational as they have become, are old bottles, unable to hold, and to bear, the new wine of the New-Church, the grand spiritual truths of the Lord's Second Coming.

New Truths. When the mind takes a new step, to advanced phases of spiritual truth, it must adopt new doctrines, as vessels to contain the new truths, for daily use. The regenerate understanding must be of a quality capable of all necessary expansion, to bear the strain which new truths bring upon the mind. For every new truth, after entering the mind, subjects the mind to temptations, spiritual fermentations, that it may purge itself of its impurities, and may hold the truth in a clear, enduring condition. The truth is not fixedly ours, until we have suffered for it, and fought for it, and lived for it.

Breaking The Old Bottles. When we see the truth in its inward sense, its merely apparent literal aspect passes away; the expansive power of the new truth breaks the old bottle, the old literal doctrine, and that bottle perishes. And if we have nothing in place of it, the wine of spiritual truth is spilled. For instance: a man has believed the old ideas of the creation, literally, as given in Genesis. But enlightened instruction and rational thought show him that Genesis does not claim to teach physical science. The new wine of new truth breaks the old bottle of old doctrine. Now, if the man has not any new bottle, new doctrine, ready for use, the wine will be spilled; i.e., he will lose the truth; he will reject Genesis, as not a Divine book. But Genesis is a Divine book.

But, if he puts the new wine of truth into the new bottle of the doctrine of the spiritual sense of the Word, in which Genesis is seen to treat of the spiritual creation and regeneration of the human mind, he will save both the wine and the bottle, both the truth and the doctrine. Without the bottle of a true doctrine, he will not be able to have his truth in condition for use.

Garments And Wine. The parable speaks of both the garment and the wine, not as a mere repetition, but because the garment represents the truth in its outward uses, as a clothing of the mind, and the wine represents truth of an inward kind, with inward uses, warming and enlivening the spirit. And, in agreement with this fact, we find, in the Greek of the text, the word for new is not the same, in the two cases. The old bottles are, in one sense, the rituals of the Jewish Church, and the new wine is the truth of Christianity Again, the old bottles are the perverted doctrines of the First Christian Church, and the new wine is the truth of the New-Church. The old and the new do not agree—Vainly would we patch up the old doctrine with a piece from the new; or carry the new wine in the old bottles. The Lord said, “Behold, I make all things new;” including doctrines and forms, as well as affections and thoughts. The old doctrines were adapted to the old ideas, but not to the new truths.

Illustration.

Take, for instance, the old doctrine of regeneration, as an instantaneous operation. As long as a man holds that doctrine, he cannot grasp the New-Church truth, that regeneration is a gradual process of growth. Even the theological terms of the old teachings are different from the new. Minds that are spiritually old are like the old wine bottles; they have expanded to the extent of their ability, and, their elasticity has departed. They are fixed in their ways, and incapable of bearing any further strain. They can hold the old wine, but not the vigorous new wine. Truth gives life to doctrine, and doctrine gives support to the truth. But the doctrine must be able to expand, with the truth. As men outgrow the clothing of their boyhood, and need garments appropriate to their manhood, so the mind outgrows old doctrines, and must be clad in new ones, suitable to its present conditions. Every system of doctrine is adapted to some stage of mental growth; and, outgrowing that state, we outgrow its doctrines. The New And The Old. For instance: to make a New-Churchman, more is needed than merely to secure some little idea of the New Church truths, and then to put that idea as a new patch upon the old doctrines; or to pour the new wine into the old bottles. We must have a new system of doctrine, from center to circumference, and a new way of life, to embody the new doctrine. And this fact shows the uselessness of trying to smuggle New-Church ideas into a man's mind without letting him know their distinctive quality. In doing this, you only patch his old garments with a new piece, or put the new wine into his old bottle. He can never make any practical use of the new truth, until he acknowledge it as new truth, in new doctrine.

Spiritual Danger.

There is danger in superficially adopting new ideas of truth, and then trying to go on, with them, with our old ideas of life, and our old habits. But the new life cannot be held in old habits, or in old ways of thinking.

We need not merely to be conformed to the world's standards, but transformed by the Spirit of Truth. The truth for the New-Church is interior truth, truth for the interior mind; but the truth of the old theology is external truth; or, often, mere appearance of truth, to the natural mind.

Illustrations.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of the Lord. How do men think of God, by the old doctrine? He seems to be angry, partial and vindictive in character, and mysteriously divided, in person.

Contrast such views with the clear truths of the New-Church, teaching the infinite goodness and love of the one God, in one Person, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Contrast the old doctrine of a "vicarious atonement," and "justification by faith alone," with the New-Church doctrine of an at-one-ment, or agreement, between God and man, as man shuns evils, and does good, in love, faith and obedience to the Lord; and in which the man is saved from the evil that he rejects from his whole life, in feeling, thought and conduct. Look at the old doctrine of the literal truth of all the Sacred Scriptures, regarded as Divine because the Lord guided the writers to be accurate in statement; and contrast this with the New-Church truths of the literal and spiritual senses of the Scriptures, the body and the spirit of the Word, related by correspondence.

Take the old doctrine of life, depending upon piety, and having little practical relation to men's actual evils; and contrast that doctrine with the new doctrine of life, in which a man is shown to be good, just in so far as he does good, and shuns evils, in all things of his two-fold life, acting as of himself, and yet sustained by the Lord.

Patching The Old.

Now, clearly it is of no use to try to hold these old doctrines, and to patch them with pieces from the New-Church, nor to use them as old bottles for new wine. "For the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old," and "new wine must be put into new bottles." We can not hold the new truths as living principles, while our actual states of life, and our conduct, are governed by the old ideas of our natural mind. A New-Churchman must form his whole life in the light of the New-Church, and give it the distinctive quality of the New-Church.

Old And New Wine.

"No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." Those who are satisfied with the old life, do not feel drawn to the new. It requires time to produce a New-Churchman; to grow out of the old, and into the new. And all who are fixed in the old quality of life, are unwilling to change. Being in the spirit of the old, they reject the new. Those who live in externals, can not be brought, at once, to see and appreciate internals. Natural-minded men do not see the realness of spiritual life. But the intelligent New-Churchman sees that the spiritual life is the real life, governing and forming the outward life. The New Heaven.

Before a New-Church could be raised up, on the earth, a new heaven had to be formed. And, as the new heaven increases, its influence will increase, and the New-Church upon the earth will increase accordingly; for the New Jerusalem must find the right conditions ready for it, before it can descend from the heavens. The New-Jerusalem, the New-Church, can not descend from heaven, at once, and by compulsion, but only as men are prepared to receive it And this will be as the falses of the old theology are removed. For what is new can not gain admittance where falses have been implanted, unless the falses be removed. The question of the descent of the New-Jerusalem is, then, a question of the readiness and preparation of men to receive the new quality of life, by means of the new doctrine of truth. You cannot Christianize a thorough Jew, who is confirmed in the spirit and life of the Jewish dispensation; nor can you make a New-Churchman out of one who is confirmed in the spirit and life of the old-church quality of good and truth. The old conditions are not fit receptacles for new life.

Connection Between Parables.

We see a connection between the parable last considered, and the one now under consideration. The parable of "The House on the Rock and the House on the Sand," taught the need of living on the truths that we know. And the parable about the garments and the wine, teaches us that the old doctrines and states of life are not able to hold the new truth and new life; and that, in order actually to receive new truths into our lives, we, ourselves, must be made new, in the regeneration. We must be lifted up to the level of the new truths. "If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them."

25. The Blind Leading the Blind.

The Blind Leading the Blind.

(Luke 6:39.) Evil Induces Falsity.

Blindness. The ignorant instructor misleads both himself and his pupil.

Physical blindness represents mental blindness. Those who are spiritually blind are those whose mental eyes are closed against the light of truth. For truth must be seen in its own light. Those who are in the belief and practice of false principles are not in the light of truth, and do not see in such light. They have eyes, but they see not.

Degrees Of Blindness. But there are degrees of blindness, mentally, as well as physically. Blindness may be the result of a natural defect, or of our own bad habits. So, spiritually, blindness may be from ignorance, or from evil. And there are several varieties of mental blindness; viz., First, Ignorance of truth, where the truth is not known, at all. Second, Error in doctrine, where the truth is known, as doctrine, but innocently misunderstood. Third, Falsification of truth, where the truth is known theoretically, but misapplied, to suit the man's selfish desires. Fourth, rejection of truth from the will, where the man is not willing to receive the truth, because he feels its opposition to himself. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." He "hateth the light, his deeds being evil." In the third case, the man makes the law of God of no effect, in his own mind, by perverting it, according to the traditions of men. He observes the form of the truth, but not its spirit. He carefully pays "tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin," but omits "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and truth."

Scribes And Pharisees. In Matthew 23:16-17, blindness is specifically applied to the Scribes and Pharisees, who are called "blind guides." But the Scribes and Pharisees were representative of all men, in all ages, who are in similar states of mind and life; and who do not admit into their minds the light of spiritual truth; and who, while influencing others, mislead both themselves and those whom they teach. And the result is, that "they both fall into the ditch;" or, literally, the "deep place," or "pit." The Pit. As the man who is blind is liable to fall into a pit, so, spiritually, the man who is blind to spiritual truth is liable to fall into mental pits, false principles of thought and of life. In the letter of the Scripture, much is said of persons "going down into the pit," etc.; i.e., mentally sinking into Use principles. "He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." The pit is falsity, and the rock is the truth. "He hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made." Here, it is shown, in terms, that the wicked man falls a victim to his own false principles.

Misleading Others. And the parable shows that his influence tends to drag down with him, those whom he teaches and influences. And, to show the evil of misleading others, we have the prohibitions of the law in the Old Testament: "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind." "Cursed be he who maketh the blind to wander out of the way."

“If a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make good [the ox or ass], and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his;” i.e., if a man shall teach a falsity, and mislead another person, he shall, on recognizing the facts, exert himself to undo his bad work, and give the truth, instead; and so far as he did wrong, the evil shall be his fault. And what a beautiful rule of life this is, for our practical use. We do not desire to be “blind leaders of the blind;” and so, when we realize that any selfish pride, or other evil, has induced us to take a wrong stand, in any matter, we should be prompt and energetic to undo the bad work that we have done, so that our influence may be good, and not evil.

Misleading By Example.

Those who have the letter of the Word of God, but who falsify it in their own lives, are practically teaching falsity. For a man teaches by his example, more than by precept. The Scribes and Pharisees had the letter of the Word, and yet, in falsifying it, they were blind leaders of the blind. And so is every man who follows their example. The sincere teacher must be in earnest, applying truth to men’s actual lives, for their regeneration.

There are many persons who, in their easy-going mental ways, have no vigorous hatred of evil. They imbibe the ordinary general sentiments of their day and community, against sin, and in favor of goodness; but they have no profound knowledge of the distinctions between good and evil, and no rational discernment of the quality of their own affections and thoughts. They love smooth things; they feel offended at plain characterizations of practical sins. They can associate with what they call small evils, without any abhorrence; and they think it is unkind to call such things by hard names. The Teacher. And towards this class of persons, every earnest teacher of truth feels a serious duty, if he would avoid being a blind leader of the blind. He must try to help them to develop a vigorous repugnance towards all evils, no matter how small in appearance; for small evils are merely infant scorpions, growing and gathering strength, for their infernal work. The teacher who has not, himself, learned a horror of evils, is not in condition to teach truth to others, without danger of misleading them into the ditches of practical falsity, under the appearance of truth. A teacher needs not only to be instructed in doctrines, held in the memory, but also to be in a right state of mind towards the truth; if not, he may make wrong applications of right doctrine, and may practically mislead others, to their injury.

Illustration. For instance; it is true that “the Lord will provide;” but it is not to be inferred from this truth, that men shall not exert themselves, to provide as of themselves. An unwise man may do a charity in an unwise way; and in so doing it, he may do injury to others; and he may make himself a blind leader of the blind, teaching them practical falsity, under the guise of truth.

Every man becomes a blind leader of the blind, who fails to teach men that the way to happiness is to shun every evil, as a sin against God, and to learn and obey what the Lord teaches, that they may know good from evil. The Light Of Truth.

Those who think rationally, know that truths appear in their own light; but those who think irrationally, or unsoundly, do not believe in the truth from any insight, or any, perception of the truthfulness of what is taught.

Interior thought is in the light of heaven, which is the spiritual light of truth. But exterior thought is in natural light. And the understanding of a man must be elevated into interior light by love and wisdom; and then he can see that a thing is true, though he never before heard it stated. A merely sensuous man can no more see heavenly truth, as truth, than his physical body could bear the pure heat and light of the sun, untempered by atmospheres.

Spirit And Form Of Truth. And it is not enough to be in the knowledge of right doctrine; we need to be in the spirit of it also; and this depends upon the state of our will towards the truth.

“No words, whate’er their wisdom, more can tell than what the hearer’s wisdom understands.” And so, even in an argument, we must see that we advocate the spirit of the truth, and not merely the form of it. If we take the form of truth, to uphold ourselves in a practical wrong, we falsify the truth; and, to the extent of our influence, we thus become blind leaders of the blind. And, in the context, we read that we must first cast the beam out of our own eye, before we can see clearly to pull the mote out of our brother’s eye. The real difficulty is not in the lack of truth, but in the lack of perception of it. The Truth As Law.

Truth is everywhere. Wherever there is anything, there is law; for God is everywhere: and God’s methods of practical operation are natural laws. Over the whole creation, from center to circumference, law is supreme. And every law is a truth. The ignorant savages of the earth stand appalled before the demonstrative phenomena of outward nature, which are scientifically understood by civilized men. And yet such phenomena are, in the lands of the ignorant, as fully governed by law as are similar phenomena among enlightened nations. But, by knowledge of law, civilized men have escaped the terrors of ignorance. And so, spiritually, the terrors of spiritual ignorance pass away before rational intelligence in spiritual truth. The mind that is interiorly instructed in the truths of the New-Church, has a vast store-house of rational knowledge, which are of practical use, in the building up of spiritual life.

Responsibility.

Blindness may be a misfortune, rather than a fault. And so may ignorance. But, though all men are born ignorant, no sane man need remain ignorant of spiritual truth. And every man is responsible for the results of his own neglect. The Profounder Meaning. And this brings us to a profounder sense of the parable, its most practical spiritual meaning. In this sense, the blind leader is our blind will, blinded by evil; and the blind one who is led is our blind understanding, blinded by falsity. And they both fall into the ditch of falsity.

See the condition of our natural will. It is full of impulses, but it has no light. It cannot see principles; it can only feel. It has no insight into the quality of its own impulses. But, in order that we might not be without mental sight, our Lord implanted in our minds, an understanding, or intellect; and this is the eye of our mind. And so we are taught the truth, and thus given to see the character of the passions that dwell in our own hearts. And on this ability to see the truth depends our capacity to be regenerated. The will and the understanding can cooperate, in a heavenly marriage of good in the will and truth in the understanding, united in the life. But if we “love darkness, [our] deeds being evil,” then our blind will leads our blind understanding, and both fall headlong into the ditch of false principles. “The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single [literally, free from defect], thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall

be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.”

Examples. A wrong impulse is always a blind leader, and we are always unwise to follow it. “Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?” Can an evil passion open our eyes to the Lord’s truth? No; it closes our spiritual eyes. When we fall into anger, we let ourselves down into the mere light of the senses, which are blind to spiritual things. We may take this as a rule of practical life: Whenever we are in a bad passion, we are not in condition to trust our judgment as to what is true. The passion blinds us; it is a blind leader of a blind understanding; and it is sure to lead us to false views and false conclusions, even when we think we are right, and think we intend to be right, and intend to do right. From the unholy fires of anger there arises a dense smoke of sensuous thought, which obscures the clear light of spiritual truth. Good influences, only, can open our minds to the truth.

Sometimes, in an emergency, our good impulses come first; and, afterwards, we go against them. But this is the case when we allow an evil desire to overcome a good one. Our Lord then first arouses our interior life, before our evil passion is aroused. And, if we yield to our bad impulse, and reject the good, we refuse to follow our Lord as a leader; and we are being led by our blind will. And the result will be disastrous.

We cannot trust our own impulses; for they always need the light of the revealed Word, and the leadership of our Lord. Often, when we think we are right, we are utterly wrong, blinded by a blind leader. “Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Opening Blind Eyes.

When, in the prophecies of the Word, we read of the time when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened,” how natural it is to think that the words apply -to the heathen; and to forget that we are the spiritual heathen to whom they especially apply. How little we see of the grandeur and glory of regenerate life. How little we open our eyes in the light of heavenly truth. None are so blind as those who will not see. The Remedy. In the verse following the parable, we have the remedy presented, by means of which we can come out of spiritual blindness, and into the light of heavenly truth. “The disciple is not above his master; but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master.” The Lord is the Master, and the man is the pupil. And, as the Lord teaches by truth, so truth is the master. And the man must not place himself above the truth, or above the Lord. But he who, in love, faith and obedience, follows his Master, in the light and life of truth, shall be as his Master; i.e., he shall be in the image and likeness of his Divine Master. “Now ye are clean, through the Word which I have spoken unto you.”

Here lies the whole story: the man who sets himself and his desires, and his views, above the truth, remains in spiritual blindness, unable to see in the heavenly light; but he who sets the truth first, and submits his affections, his thoughts, and his deeds to the test and control of the truth, lives in the light of heaven, and walks with his heavenly Master. The spiritual coming of the Lord to the minds of men, is to open their spiritual eyes, their understandings, to the light of spiritual truth. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;” they shall see God in His Divine Truth, in His holy Word. And, because their hearts are pure, or free from evil, there will not be, in them, a blind will, to mislead their understanding.

Sacrifices.

Because of the representative signification of blindness, the blind men among the priests, in Israel, were forbidden to officiate in the worship. And the Israelites were commanded not to offer up to the Lord, in sacrifice, any blind animal. Our Influence.

Each of us has some influence, and is responsible for that influence. Everyone is called upon to be a good leader, and not a blind one. And we are responsible, not only for our own work, while we live, but also for the continued influence of our earthly life, after we have passed beyond this world. Every bad state of our life goes on down the ages, doing bad work, and making it harder for others to do right. Every evil passion sets in motion some current of unhappiness. And who can tell where it will stop?

I do not mean that we may comfort our self-love with the idea that others are to blame for our outbursts of evil. We are prone to say, "You made me do it." But there is another side of the case: we have no right to be in condition to be driven to sin, even by the evils of others; much less by things that are not evil. Generally, our own over-sensitiveness, which is selfishness, is to blame for our outbursts of evil temper.

Illustration.

If I allow matches to lie around on my floors, I cannot justly censure you, if you unintentionally tread upon them, and set fire to my house. I am responsible, for allowing my floors to be in such an inflammable condition. When we are stirred up, we can see what evils are in us, needing restraint. The tiger is most truly himself, when he is in a rage. When he is quietly sleeping, or inactive, he is not exhibiting his characteristic life. So, if we have evils in us, we must judge of our own character by these evils, and not by the quiet moments when nothing arouses us.

We are apt to judge of our own character by our best states. But our longings, or aspirations, are not real, until fixed in our conduct. As a man, living on a dry, uninviting island, amid many hardships and little joy, may occasionally, when the wind is in the right direction, catch the fragrance of the orange groves, and the melodies of the music, wafted to him from the main-land, beyond; so we, even in our hard, cold, selfish life, may at favorable times, when under good influences, catch something of the fragrance and the melodies of heaven, sent to us in heavenly mercy, to arouse us to exertion, that we may permanently reach such a lovely life. But we must not mistake these occasional visitors for our own mental family. Many things are yet needed before we can permanently possess these things.

Courage And Love. And those who help to lead us to these heavenly things, must have spiritual courage enough to hear the Word at the Lord's mouth, and to warn the people, from Him. And, if we love the truth, even though we are rebuked, love will take away the sting of the rebuke: for we shall see that the rebuke is directed to our evil, that our souls may be saved from evil.

But, if we sink into natural-minded states, and fail to value the strength of love which goes out with all well-meant criticism; if we fall into the terrible falsity that our best friends are those who never see any faults in us; we shall be making friends of the most subtle and dangerous influences, and rejecting the heaven-sent aid of our best friends: and then, with our self-deluded hearts on fire with infernal passions, and our clouded understandings enslaved by our corrupt hearts, our hearts will

be blind leaders of the blind, carrying us down into the pits of direful falsities.

26. The Two Debtors.

The Two Debtors.

(Luke 7:41-43.) Spiritual And Natural Love.

Summary. A man's character depends upon the quality of his ruling-love. He, whose love is high in quality, rises to a high and heavenly condition of practical life; while he whose love is low in quality, cannot enter into higher, or greater, actual states of life than his ruling-love fits him to receive. This is the principle illustrated in the parable, which can be understood best when read in connection with its context, Luke 7:36-47.

Natural Men Misunderstand. The natural-minded man, like Simon, the Pharisee, always misunderstands, and misjudges, the character and the purpose of the man who is moved, by spiritual affection. Spiritual men and natural men live in different mental worlds of affection and thought, worlds essentially different in quality, or kind. The parable was addressed to Simon, as a natural-minded man, to show him that there are different kinds, or qualities, of love; and that the external life does not always indicate the quality of the inward character, except to those who can look through the outward man, and see the inward man. A self-righteous man is very apt to despise men who are inwardly better than himself, although their outward conduct may have been, in the past, disorderly and even sinful.

We remember another Pharisee, who went up to the temple, to pray, and who thanked God that he was righteous, and not like the sinful publican, who also knelt in the temple. And yet, as the Lord said, "This man [the publican] went down to his house justified, rather than the other." The Creditor And The Debtors. The creditor is the Lord, to whom all are indebted, for all that they have. Two debtors are mentioned, one of whom owed a large debt, and the other a small debt. But, in interpreting spiritual things, we are to regard quality, rather than quantity. Everyone owes the Lord all that he is and has. But all do not recognize their debt, nor acknowledge it. Those who, in representative language, are said to owe the Lord much, are those who see and acknowledge the greatness of their debt to the Lord; who know that the Lord has done much for them, and that they owe everything to Him. And those who are said to owe the Lord but little, are those who think they owe Him but little; who, to a small extent, see what they owe the Lord. The man who owed the creditor five hundred pence represents those for whom the Lord has done much; and the man who owed fifty pence, represents those who allow the Lord to do but little for them; not that the Lord gives to men unequally; but that men are unequal in their reception of what the Lord can do for them. "Are not My ways equal, saith the Lord? Are not your ways unequal?"

Difference In Men. In this parable, as in "The Talents," the different amounts lent to men, or put in their charge, represent the different states of men, as to their willingness to receive what the Lord gives freely to all men. The Lord gives good and truth to all men, as freely as He gives physical heat and light. And the man who opens his heart to the Lord, in love, and allows the Lord to fill him with a heavenly quality of love, is the one who owes the Lord much; for much has been done for

him, and within him. But the man who, in his selfishness, prefers to love himself, and who will not open his heart to the Lord, cannot have the great work of regeneration done within him. The Lord can penetrate but little into the man's conscious mind and life. And, hence, the man has no living experience of his great debt to the Lord.

Divine Forgiveness. The language of the parable is according to natural appearances: it speaks of the Lord as forgiving one man more than the other, because, apparently, the former's debt was larger. But what is forgiveness, as applied to the Lord? It is not merely a release from the penalty of a certain act. The penalty that is attached to sin was not externally affixed to sin, by the Lord, as a legislature attaches a penalty to the breach of a civil law. The law that sin breaks is a law of man's own being, inherent in his mental constitution. And the penalty is an inseparable result of the breaking of the law; just as physical suffering and disease are the necessary consequences of the breaking of the laws of physical health, which are laws of our own bodily constitution. As far as any ill-will, or arbitrary punishment, is concerned, the Lord always forgives every man. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" In the true sense, then, in which we are to understand forgiveness, that man is forgiven, who sees and acknowledge his sins, and ceases to do them; i.e., he makes practical use of the Divine forgiveness, which is extended to every man. But the fact that the Lord does not intentionally punish men, does not remove the actual penalty which is inherent in all sin, and inseparable from it, as long as the man continues in sin. Therefore, the only practical way to use the Divine forgiveness, is to cease sinning, and thus to escape the penalty.

Paying The Debts.

Thus, in the parable, the man whose debt seemed to be the larger, and to whom the creditor forgave more, is the man who, by more earnestly ceasing to sin, attains a greater degree of regeneration, and more fully sees and appreciates the Divine goodness, in saving him from his own evils.

Neither of these men had anything with which to pay the debt; i.e., they had no goodness of their own, with which to off-set their sins. All that they had was a free gift from the Lord. So it is, spiritually; the Lord asks no other payment of our debt, than its acknowledgment by us, and our willing reception of His bounties. For, to receive His blessings, men must cease to do evil, and they must live according to His commandments. The measure of a man's capacity to receive from the Lord, is the measure of his acknowledgment of what he owes the Lord. He who does not acknowledge any indebtedness to the Lord, is not in mental condition to receive spiritual blessings.

Man's Natural Condition. In our natural-minded condition, our affections are selfish. We love our family and friends, as parts of ourselves. The unregenerate man does not rise above a selfish quality of love. Even his most devoted love is merely a form of self-love. He loves others for his own sake. We may make great personal sacrifices for those whom we love naturally, and yet our love may be utterly selfish in its inward motive. And, in our natural-minded condition, our affections are narrow and limited; we love those who love us, or who gratify our natural desires.

Regeneration.

But, as we begin to be regenerated, our love undergoes a change in character; for our change is a change in the quality, or character, of our affections. As we progress in regeneration, our love expands, going out more fully to others, and regarding the character, or quality, of others; and being interested in them for their own sakes, rather than for our sake. Our love gradually includes the whole human race. The purer our love becomes, the broader it becomes, and the more freely it extends to all men. In an unregenerate state, we hate those who seem to oppose us. We regard everything from its apparent attitude towards our own desires and plans. But, by regeneration, we gradually learn to regard others from their stand-point, also. And we learn to love them, not merely for what they have been to us, but rather for what they are, in themselves, in quality and life.

Change Of Views.

Naturally, we regard those as good, who are apparently good to us; but, spiritually, we know those to be good, who are good to the Lord; i.e., who keep His commandments, in a useful life. As we learn to love our Lord we learn, also, to love men according to how much of the Lord's life they have in them. And we learn to love the spiritual interests of all men, and to seek means and opportunities to help all men to be regenerated. We pity the sinner, while we hate the sin.

Thus, self-love is exclusive, but regenerate love is inclusive. The Lord loves all men, even the devils; and He seeks to make all happy; and He succeeds in doing so, as far as they will receive happiness.

Love And Work.

It is the case with all things of our life, that the more we love them, the more we are interested in their welfare, and the more we will do for them. And more than this: the quality of our love for them is measured by the quality of what we do for them. We must be careful not to mistake quantity for quality. Those whose love may be greater in quantity, may be very selfish in quality.

Illustrations.

Take, for instance, the states of mind in a lover, towards a maiden whom he loves. Possibly he makes great professions, and in sentimental language, proclaims himself unable to live without her. And yet, his love may be utterly selfish. Spiritual love is chiefly interested in spiritual life. As to externals, it trusts in the Divine Providence, even when its own plans are thwarted. No healthy, or spiritual, love ever leads to despair, or to suicide.

And, in married life, the quality of love is seen in its modes of expression. The merely natural man lives for this world, and is satisfied to have things so ordered that he will have a pleasant time, and nothing to annoy or criticize him. Self-indulgence may go on, under his eyes, without any rebuke from him, unless it interferes with his own self-indulgence. His selfish love for his children permits him to indulge them, as well as himself. But the love of a spiritual man is spiritual in quality; and it looks to spiritual ends. It regards all children as the Lord's children, and it trains them by His laws. And it regards a married partner, not merely as a companion in the externals of worldly life, but more especially as a spiritual being, preparing for the eternal life of the world.

Externally, the sensuous, selfish, indulgent parent, or married-partner, may seem to be much more pleasant and comfortable. But, in the depths of his nature, his self-love is his ruling power. He does not love anything, spiritually; and, hence, he cannot love anything unselfishly. And, on the

other side, the spiritual man, loving with a spiritual love, looks at life from a spiritual stand-point, and works for spiritual ends. And, very naturally, in the eyes of children, and of natural-minded adults, he may seem to be somewhat severe and unsympathetic, because the plane of his work is above their comprehension. He is working for their spiritual life; and, to do this, he must work against their evils. And they cannot appreciate the quality of his love, until they, themselves, come under the influence of spiritual affections.

Love To The Lord. And in regard to the Lord, at first, a man loves God for what God has done for him. He loves God for a selfish reason, and for his own (the man's) sake. But, as regeneration progresses within him, he learns to distinguish the quality of the Lord's love, and to see that God is love. And then the man learns to love the Lord for the Lord's own sake; and for what the Lord is, in character. And as we follow the Lord, in the regeneration, keeping His commandments, we become more and more like Him, in the quality of our love. We change our mental states; we outlive our old and selfish states, and live ourselves into new conditions. And the better we become, the more the Lord can do for us, and in us. As we learn, by personal experience, how much the Lord does for us, in lifting us above evil, we grow more and more opposed to evils of all kinds, especially our own evils.

Thus, in the true sense of the parable, the more we love, the more we are forgiven; i.e., the more we come into a condition of mind and of life, in which the Lord can save us from evils, and thus give us the practical results of His constant forgiveness. Men who have little love, have little capacity to use the Lord's forgiveness; they have little openness to heavenly life.

Spiritual Strength.

Spiritually, a man's strength of character is in the quality quantity of his love. A powerful love of good necessarily includes a correspondingly powerful hatred of evil, especially the evil that is in ourselves. As we come into conjunction with the Lord, in spirit, the Divine influences come down, and withhold us from evils, even in our external life. This they do, by our co-operation, in keeping the commandments. For, as we love the Lord, it becomes our spiritual meat and drink to do His will.

Spiritual And Natural.

Thus, in one sense, we may say that the man, in the parable, who was the greater debtor, and who was forgiven more, represents the spiritual man, who attains a high degree of regeneration; while the one who owed less, and was forgiven less, represents the natural-minded man, who, though seeking literally to obey the commandments, has not yet attained a spiritual-minded state. The quality of the love is different, in the two men. And the quality of a man's love to the Lord is the quality of the love which he has been willing to receive from the Lord. For every man receives love of such quality as he is willing to work for, by putting away his evils. And the quality of his hatred devil, measures the quality of his love of good. The Lord enters into the man's heart, with the love of good, and the hatred of evil; and the man makes this, love his own, when, under its influence, he ceases to do evil, and does good, in the name of the Lord. Thus, the quality of a man's love to the Lord is tested by the quality of the love which he, himself, exercises towards other men, John, the apostle, was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved," because John was one who, by loving Jesus, opened his heart, and allowed the Lord's love to enter into him, and to bless him. When a

man loves much, in quality, as well as in quantity, he rises into a higher spiritual character, because he repudiates the sins of his past life; and he hates the evils which took form in those sins. As he lives himself out of evil, and into good, the sins of his past life do not adhere to him. They are no longer a part of him, because he no longer cherishes the evils which produced such sins. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," because love keeps the law, and thus comes under the protection of the law.

Love And Forgiveness. The law is fulfilled, or filled full of life, to him who lives by it. Thus, because of the woman's fullness of love to the Lord, the Lord said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." For, by the strength of her love, and according to its quality, she entered into a new life. In her present state of heart, she would not again commit such sins. Sins are the outward expression and embodiment of evil affections and false thoughts. Thus, our sins remain with us, as long as our character remains the same. But, when our character changes, we outgrow the things that belonged to our former character; as, in returning to health, after illness, we outgrow the sick conditions.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" not as a punishment, but as a result of sin. "But, if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die." For the Lord's effort is not to punish men, but to save them. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved." The Father is the Divine Love, and the Son is the Divine Truth, which the Father, or the Divine Love, has sent to men, to teach them the way back into the blessings of the Divine Love. And the Father and the Son are one God, in one person. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." The Evidence Of Our Love.

And, as to the evidence that we love the Lord, the Lord, Himself, declares, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Our love to the Lord is not, then, to be measured by our gushing sentimentality at prayer-meetings, nor by our demonstrative external piety. The measuring-rod of heaven penetrates more profoundly than these superficial things. The evidence of our love to God is to be found in the measure in which we shun evils, because they are sins against God, and do good, in our practical daily life. If we love the Lord, we shall, for His sake, restrain our tendencies to evil. And so, in regard to our fellow-men. He has the greatest love for his friends, who for their sake, restrains his own tendencies to evil, and seeks to influence his friends to restrain their evil tendencies.

Spiritual Sympathy.

Who, then, is full of genuine sympathy? Not the man who makes the greatest display of external pitifulness over your outward troubles, but the man who, rising high above external effects, throws his strength into sympathy for, your soul, and seeks to help you to put away your evils, which result in sorrows; who does not merely cry over the fall of man, but goes resolutely to work, to lift him up.

He whose tears are always on the surface, ready to flow at a moment's notice, often has his bad temper equally ready to breakout upon you. But that man has genuine sympathy, who for the sake of your regeneration, is willing to do the unpleasant work of rebuking your evils; who, in the

strength of a spiritual love, is willing to break up the sensuous pleasantness of indulgence, and to have, instead, natural struggle and sorrow, in order that you may have a higher quality of life, in the world to come; who is willing to incur even your dislike, if, thereby, you may be led to see your evils, and to put them away. This is love; this is sympathy, broad and high enough to look over the few years and low conditions of this external life, and to fix it-, attention upon the real and eternal world, beyond. This is loving sympathy, towards whose profound depths and heights, the paltry, pitiful, sensuous sympathy, which forgets the Divine Providence, and encourages self-love, is as dross to pure gold, tried in the fire.

False Appearances.

How often it is the case, that the very things that trouble us, and which are the real causes of our sorrow, are the very things that we are unwilling to give up; while the things that seem to be the origin of our troubles, are the Lord's providential means of our regeneration. The Lord's love looks to our spiritual good; to the upbuilding of a regenerate character within us.

Heavenly Methods. And when a heavenly quality of love fills the heart of a man, he will work as the Lord works, for spiritual ends, and by rational means. And he will do this, in his association with his friends, and with all his fellow-men, as well as with himself. He dare not do otherwise, acknowledging all good to be from the Lord, and the Lord's way to be the only right way. He knows that the Lord has done much for him, and he longs to induce all others, (particularly those who are bound to him by especially tender ties) to open their hearts more fully to the Lord, that He may do more for them, to their eternal happiness. On all planes, and in all degrees of life, he feels a vigorous love, and a tender sympathy for all. And he exhibits his affections in such ways as will be most conducive to the spiritual good of all.

But, as with the Lord, so with men, their spiritual affection is not appreciated, except by spiritual men. Natural minded men, like the man with one talent, in the parable of The Talents," regard the Lord as "a hard man." Our work, then, is to cultivate spirituality of character, that we may love the Lord, and, in the contented usefulness of a good life, learn to appreciate His infinite love. "Whoso are wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

27. The Good Samaritan.

The Good Samaritan.

(Luke 10:30-37.) Love Of The Neighbor. The Principle. The love of the neighbor consists in being well-disposed towards all men. As we are taught that there are two great commandments, love to the Lord, and love to the neighbor, it is important to understand who the neighbor is, and what constitutes charity, or love to the neighbor. And the parable illustrates this subject, by practical example. The Literal Story.

“A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted [or tested] Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He [Jesus] said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?” [For these lawyers of the Scriptures were ecclesiastical lawyers, or teachers of the Mosaic law.] “And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus answered him, by giving the parable. The Lawyer’s Question. This lawyer’s question has considerable force, when we remember the condition of Jerusalem, in that day. The city was under the dominion of the Roman conquerors. And its streets were filled with a motley group, gathered from all quarters of the globe. And it was a serious question, to this Jewish lawyer, as to who had a right to claim from him the duties of a neighbor. His own friends, his own class, and, possibly, by a great stretch of thought, his own nation, might claim from him neighborly love and conduct.

But, he could scarcely imagine that he could be expected to feel, or to act, as a neighbor to the whole horde of uncircumcised infidels, barbarians, and national enemies whose presence profaned the streets of the holy city. And, more than O, there was a class to whom he felt a peculiarly strong aversion, the hated Samaritans, who were an abomination to the Jews. Surely, he thought, no one could ask him to feel anything but hatred to an accursed Samaritan. The Samaritans. For the Samaritans were aliens, who had been placed in the land, after the Israelitish inhabitants had been carried away, as captives. “The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof” And these hated aliens even established a temple on Mount Gerizim, as a rival to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

Limiting The Law. No wonder that this lawyer, or doctor of the ecclesiastical law, (probably a Levite) was willing to justify himself, in his hatred of accursed aliens and enemies, and so desired to limit the idea of neighbor to his own people, and, if possible, to his own class. When he asked the first question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” the Lord referred him back to the Divine law, of which he was a teacher. But he then desired to limit the operation of the law. But the Lord, in the parable, expanded the application of the law, to cover the whole human race, and even showed the heavenly qualities of the despised Samaritan.

Jerusalem To Jericho.

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho,” a journey of about eighteen miles, through the worst, and most rugged, and most dangerous, road in Palestine; so dangerous, so infested by robbers, that a part of it was called “The Bloody Way.” Many priests and Levites lived at Jericho, and went back and forth to Jerusalem, to take their turns in ministering in the temple-service. The poor man, in the parable, fell among thieves, or robbers, who stripped him of his clothing, beat him, wounded him, and left him half dead. The Priest And The Levite. In the common translation, it is said “by chance” a priest came along. But, properly, it is “by a coincidence.” In fact, there is not, in the New Testament, any word meaning chance, luck, fate, or arbitrary fortune. As the man was lying in his blood, a priest came along the road. And it would seem, that now, the poor sufferer would find help, from one of his own priests, probably going up to officiate in the temple, or just returning from the temple. But, when the priest saw the poor man, “he passed by on the other side” of the road, and left the suffering brother to his fate. “And likewise a Levite, [one of the priestly class,] when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.” Both have gone by without a word of pity, or an act of love. An ordinary dog would have stopped, to lick the wounds of the sufferer, as the dogs licked the sores of poor Lazarus. But, here, the professional teachers of the Divine Law express no sympathy, and make no attempt to apply the mercy which they teach. The Samaritan. The last hope of the dying man seems to have fled; for, if his own holy priest would not help him, where can he turn, for aid? But, a despised Samaritan comes along the road. From him, of course, the bleeding Jew can expect nothing but abuse; for, as the woman of Samaria said to Jesus, at the well of Sychar, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” The Samaritan knew, of course, how this wounded Jew regarded the Samaritans, and that he could not expect any mercy from the Jew, if their positions were reversed. But the Samaritan loved the Lord; and this love made him feel that, in their hour of need, all men were his neighbors. And so “he had compassion; and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine;” thus using, for the haughty Jew’s medicine, what the Samaritan had carried for his own food, on his journey. And then he took the wounded man, and set him on his own beast, (the Samaritan’s mule, or ass) and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And, even then, he did not feel his duty to be at an end; but, “on the morrow, when he departed, he took two pence [i.e., two days’ wages for a laborer,] and gave them to the host, [or landlord,] and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

Now, what this Samaritan did for the wounded Jew, was no light matter. He gave the Jew his food, his money, and his care. He put the Jew upon his beast, and walked, himself, while he held the half-dead Jew in his place. And, by the delay, on this dangerous road, he increased the risk of being, himself, overtaken and killed by robbers.

Jesus’ Question.

After the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer, “Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.” The whole matter is thus placed in practical form. Our neighbor is the man who needs the love and the help that we can give him.

Notice the difference between the lawyer's question, and the Lord's answer. The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" i.e., Who is entitled to claim my neighborly love and service? But the Lord's answer was rather a reply to the question, "To whom am I to be a neighbor?" And the parable showed that neighborly love depends upon our own states of affection towards others; and that we should always be in such condition of love towards all men, that their needs will call forth our love, and our wise and efficient aid. Our Neighbor. In the light of the New-Church, we see that charity, or love to the neighbor, is in the inward man, in our will; and that it consists in being well-disposed, in heart, towards all men. There is a broad sense in which every man is our neighbor, for every man is a child of God, and capable of being led back to the Lord. Every man has needs, and these needs must appeal to our judicious sympathy. Every man has the capacity to become an angel. And we are to love that capacity, in every man; and to help him to develop that capacity, and to form a heavenly character.

Abstractly, the principle of good is the neighbor whom we are to love. And every man is truly a neighbor to others, according to the quality and quantity of the good that is in him, from the Lord; i.e., according to his ruling-love. And the nearness of our fellow-men to our hearts, depends upon the nearness of our hearts to the Lord. We will pour out to others the same qualities which we allow the Lord to pour into us.

True neighborly love does not require us to hold any person above good principles. Neighborly love seeks to do good, and to restrain evil, in ourselves, and in others. We cannot do any man a greater injury, than to induce him to do evil, blinding him to a clear distinction between good and evil. Love of the neighbor is not called upon to do, for men, all that they, in their wrong states, desire us to do. Professional paupers, who "trade upon their sores, and even make sores, to trade upon," are best helped by discipline, not by indulgence. We must do what we know to be good for others. Neighborly love looks to the good that is in men, or that is to be cultivated in them.

Degrees Of Neighbor. And there are several degrees of neighbor: First, the Lord, who is Good, itself Second, the Lord's kingdom, in heaven and on earth. Third, the Church, in the aggregate. Fourth, one's country. Fifth, one's general society. Sixth, an individual. Good is to be done to these, in this order; for, what is truly for the good of the greater number, is for the good of individuals. We love good men, and have more dependence upon them, than upon weak characters. Neighborly love requires us to love the good which a man should do; and to love him because he does it. Or, if he does not do it, then we are to love his capacity to do good; and we are to help him to develop his capacity, and to allow the Lord to form him into a heaven. For heaven is an inward condition. "The kingdom of God is within you." And, whatever a man is, we are still to do right towards him; to do as we would be done unto; and not to despise him. Genuine neighborly love is like the Lord's love; and He "is good to all." "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the-unjust." To love those, only, who treat us well, is the doctrine of the hells, not of the heavens. And we can not keep this truth too plainly before our thought. Love of the neighbor is a principle of life, and not merely a sentiment. It is a love of doing good to others; of giving what the Lord gives to us.

Illustrations.

There are many persons, who, in outward sentimentality, keep their eyes piously raised to the clouds, while they fail to see their suffering fellow-men who lie about their pathway. We can truly

love our neighbor only as we love our Lord. Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The old tradition, corrupting the Scriptures, said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;" but the Lord said, "I say unto you, Love your enemies." Thus the name of neighbor covers the whole human race. A good neighbor is one who, from love, and without compulsion, is ready wisely to do any needed good.

There are evil men, who, in a thousand ways, fall upon a man, and take away his goods, physically and mentally. These are robbers, swindlers, sneaks, who prey upon the community. And our sympathy ought to go out to their innocent victims, and also to themselves, but in a very different method of expression. We are to avoid two extremes, contempt of others, on the one hand, and a mistaken sympathy, which confuses evil and good, on the other hand. The Inward Meaning.

If we are to help men out of their physical troubles, certainly we are to be even more efficient in helping them out of spiritual troubles. In its literal sense, the parable displays the outward acts of charity; and in its inward sense, it portrays the spiritual principle of charity. A natural love is a love of the person, but a spiritual love is a love of the good that is in the person, or that may be in him. Charity does not do as little as possible, but as much as possible, according to its ability.

Jerusalem And Jericho.

Jerusalem, where the temple was placed, for national worship, and for instruction, represents the Church, as to worship, and as to doctrine. A man is spiritually in Jerusalem, when he is in the knowledge of truth and doctrine, from which he seeks to worship the Lord.

Jericho was near the boundary of Canaan; and thus it represents the externals of the Church, and of life, the boundary of the Church, or that which introduces to the Church. Thus, Jericho represents good and truth, and instruction, in their external and practical phases. Jericho was called "the city of palms." And palm-trees represent our good, growing, fruit-bearing affections. And so, for a man to go down from Jerusalem to Jericho, represents a going out from spiritual instruction, into the practical things of life, in which good is to be found by practice.

Thieves. And the road from Jerusalem to Jericho; i.e., from principle to practice, is beset with many dangers. There are many robbers on the way. Spiritual thieves are all who take away a man's spiritual riches, and injure his spiritual life; all whose influence upon us is bad, including not only intentionally evil persons, but also our injudicious friends, whose careless influence encourages our evils and our self-indulgence, and tends to confuse our clear distinctions between good and evil.

Evil spirits, too, are thieves, whose influence takes away our spiritual riches and life. They stir up our natural passions, and develop our unneighborly feelings, thoughts and conduct towards others. They steal away our raiment, the truths that clothe our affections. They beat us with false suggestions. They injure and wound our hearts with false reasonings. They leave us half-dead, by almost taking away our spiritual life. They injure our states of worship of the Lord.

Thus, even if we have been in Jerusalem, and have been instructed in the truths of the Church, and have had some feelings of worship of the Lord, we are in danger of losing these spiritual riches, as we travel the dangerous road of practical, daily life, towards the application of our

instruction to the conduct of life.

Priests And Levites.

And, when we suffer from the assaults of evil influences, the priests and Levites, the evils and falses of a perverted Church, or of a perverted state of mind, cannot help us. For the priest, in a good sense, represented the love of the Lord and the Levite represented the love of the neighbor. But in a bad sense, as in the text, the priest is the love of self, and the Levite is the love of the world, in the corrupted Church, or in the corrupt natural state of mind. These “pass by, on the other side;” they are opposed to all true charity; they do not care for the neighbor.

Perhaps the priest and the Levite thought they had no time to spare, to help the wounded man; or that it was not their business. But, if we are in the love of performing uses, we shall love to do good, even to disagreeable persons. We love the use, irrespective of the person. If their evils annoy us, we shall forget that trifling matter, in our earnest love, and in our desire to rescue them from bad spiritual company, and to heal their wounds. The Samaritan. The Samaritan found time to help the sufferer. And every man will find time to do, spiritually, what he loves to do. No man is put in any position where he cannot do right, spiritually. He cannot always control his circumstances, but he can always control his own principles, in any circumstances. Those who are filled with love of the neighbor are desirous to save others from the infestations of spiritual robbers. They pour in the oil of heavenly love, and the wine of spiritual truth. They bind up the man’s wounds with practical good advice. They set the disabled sufferer on their own beasts; i.e., they set his mind upon the rational understanding of truth, on which they have ridden. They take him to the inn, the school of the Church, where spiritual food and drink are given to him; where he is instructed in good and truth; where he will be safer from evil influences, and in the care of the Lord and His angels. The Samaritan, as a Gentile, represents the natural, simple love of good and truth, natural charity. The Samaritan did his good works, while he was journeying, or progressing in life; and when he came where the other man was; i.e., when he came into a state to see the needs of others.

And, “on the morrow;” i.e., in a new state, brought about by the circumstances, he paid two pence, for the continued support of the sufferer, and also agreed to pay as much more as should be needed, when he should come that way, again; i.e., he gave all that he could, of love and of wisdom, to save the sufferer from evils and falses; and he was disposed to do more, as his ability increased, and as the other man’s need demanded.

Thus, when a man finds himself infested by evil spirits, he cannot turn, for help, to the corrupt priest and Levite, the old evils and falses of corrupt life. But his safety will come through his Gentile state of simple love of good. In the light of this beautiful parable, how significant it is that, on one occasion in the temple, the Jews, being angry at the plain teachings of Jesus, cried out to Him, “Say we not well, that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” Truly, the good Samaritan of the parable showed the spirit of Jesus. Remember, too, that when, at one time, Jesus met ten lepers, and cleansed them, only one of them turned back to glorify God; and he was a Samaritan.

Illustration.

Take an illustration of spiritual robbery. Here is a man who has been in Jerusalem, spiritually; i.e., who has been instructed in true doctrine, and has formed a habit of worshipping the Lord. But

some friend gradually induces him to believe in a “Vicarious Atonement,” and he loses his belief in a good life from religious principles, as being salvation from sin. Or, perhaps, scientific infidelity takes hold of him, and leads him to reject all things that he cannot see proven to his external senses; and to rely upon sensuous appearances, rather than on spiritual openness to truth, and perception of principles.

Now, spiritual robbers have stripped him of spiritual truths, beaten and wounded him with falsities, and left him half-dead, alive to external things only, and dead to all the higher, grander, holier things, that are open to the rational intelligence of the spiritual mind. Instead of seeing the grand verities of spiritual life, the poor wounded man is held down by sensuous things; and he imagines that all human affections and thoughts are but the temporary effects of changes in the relative positions and conditions of the molecules of the brain. Such men mistake the effect for the cause. Poor, blind leaders of the blind, both fall into the ditch of sensuous falsities. They see nothing beyond the degree and plane of natural effects, and their mental eyes are closed to the whole grand world of spiritual causes. The Love Of Saving.

But, even though such men be sorely wounded in spirit, and half-dead, yet those who love the Lord and the neighbor will feel a strong desire to save them from their dangerous condition, and to nurse them back to vigorous spiritual life. Even if others, being in bad spiritual company, exercise their evils upon us, we can ascribe the evil to the evil spirits in whose company they are; and we can try to lead them out of such company.

Forgetting all petty personal aspects of the case, we can rise to a nobler principle of neighborly love and usefulness. Reading the parable, we can hear the Lord’s command, “Go, and do thou likewise,” even to those who, despise and persecute us. The way to heaven lies through love, mercy and usefulness.

Salvation. The whole spirit of this parable shows there is no “Vicarious Atonement.” Salvation is not by “Faith, alone,” but by love, faith, and obedience. Jesus referred the lawyer to the law, itself, as the means of eternal life. And Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” And to fulfill does not mean that Jesus obeyed the law, to allow men to avoid keeping it, but that Jesus fulfilled the law, or filled the law full of life, to those who obey it. And so Jesus showed that men, themselves, must obey the law, in their daily life. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” for these are the means of life. Who Is My Neighbor? When the question arises, in a man’s mind, “Who is my neighbor?” it will be answered, within him, according to the state of his own heart. If he loves the Lord, and his fellowmen, the human race will be his neighbor. But, if he loves himself supremely, his idea of neighborly love will be narrowed down to the limits of his own heart.

Wherever the spirit of the hells crops out in self-exaltation, and contempt of others; wherever there is the infernal spirit of caste, and of prejudice against color or condition; wherever there lurks the diabolical contempt against those who humbly labor for their living; wherever there is a narrow selfishness, that regards everything from its own stand-point, alone; there the hypocritical priest and Levite refuse to help their needy fellow-men; and there is need of the love and the work of the good Samaritan. And happy is he, who, hanging up before his conscience the mirror of this searching parable, does not see his own face in the priest and the Levite. Happy is he, who not only in sentiment, but also in heart and in conduct, responds to the love that warmed the heart of

the good Samaritan, and from his loving heart, flowed forth to all who stood in need of its service.

Illustration.

Take an illustration. A few years ago, on a memorable night, a well-filled steamer plied the waters of Long Island Sound. Suddenly, in the dead of night, the sleeping passengers were aroused by the startling cry of "fire!" Rapidly the passing wind fanned the devouring flames, and forced the human freight to seek immediate safety from the fire, in the only less remorseless waves.

Amid the frightful scene, a strong-hearted and strong-armed man swam here and there, gathering the drowning passengers upon floating timbers. The wild fire was rapidly devouring the doomed vessel, and the wild winds shrieking a dismal dirge; the dense shadows and the lurid glare alternating upon the frightful scene. Few could hope to escape the common fate. The rescuing hero turned towards a sinking man to save him; when, from a gayly-dressed woman, clinging to a floating bench near by, came a voice of agony, and of piteous appeal, shrieking, "Oh I save me! save me! Don't take him; he's only a nigger." And a great wave seized her, and carried her down, to death and to judgment. Her last words breathed the very spirit of the hells. And yet she was a woman, one of "the gentler sex," to whom we look for tender love and gentle sympathy.

And, perhaps, she was a member in good standing, in some Christian Church; a Church named after Him who is no respecter of persons; who was born into the world in a poor and humble family; whose meek and lowly life was spent in ministering to all men, even the most lowly and despised; and who, in the parable before us, ascribes infernal vices to men of the ruling classes, and heavenly virtue to the despised Gentile. The New-Church.

Well, indeed, is it, for human nature, that a New Church has arisen to redeem Christianity from its perversions; to teach new truths; and to lead us all to a new quality of love and of life. Even to-day, we sadly need the loving rebuke of this beautiful parable. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, every man against his brother?" "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

28. The Importunate Midnight Friend.

The Importunate Midnight Friend.

(Luke 11:5-8.) Effort Necessary To Receive Spiritual Life. The Principle.

Heaven flows into the open human mind. And, therefore, we need to keep our hearts and understandings always open to the Lord, that He may fill us with good and truth. And, for this purpose, constant, persistent and sincere efforts are necessary.

Method Of Interpretation. The text well illustrates the fact that a parable is to be interpreted spiritually, and by correspondences, and not merely by natural comparisons. It would be blasphemous to say that the Lord, like the friend in the parable, could be indifferent to the needs of men, or unwilling to take the trouble to serve men; or that we could, by persistent asking, finally weary Him into doing for us, what His own love would not have impelled Him to do. The Lord has not periods of inactivity. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

There cannot be a literal parallel between the action of the sleeping friend, in the parable, and the Lord. The conduct of the friend was unneighborly and unfriendly. But the Lord never omits an opportunity to do good to men. He is, like the sun, with its heat and light, always seeking to give to everyone; and every man receives all the spiritual life that he will open himself to receive. And the Lord plainly teaches men that they will not be heard in heaven, on account of the quantity of their praying, but according to its quality. "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner, therefore, pray ye." Then follows "The Lord's Prayer," the model prayer. The Lord loves to give to all men; and the unwillingness is on the part of men. "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." "And him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Appearances Of Indifference. From the literal sense of the Bible, not intelligently understood, and practically misunderstood by minds holding false doctrines, there is received an idea that the Lord does not always help men as soon as He might. And there were times when Jesus, Himself, seemed to be somewhat indifferent to requests, and not prompt in granting prayers for help. Take, for instance, the case of the Greek woman, mentioned in Matthew 15:21-28, and in Mark 7:25-29, who besought Jesus to cast out a devil from her daughter. At first, "He answered her not a word." And, afterwards, He answered her indirectly. But, finally, He healed her daughter.

Cause Of Delay. But the apparent delay of Jesus was for the purpose of helping the woman to strengthen her faith, and come into condition to receive the help which He was about to give her. Thus, the Lord's seeming delay induces the man to urge himself forward to more receptive conditions. Many men, like Peter, think they are ready to receive heavenly life long before they are truly ready. And the Lord, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, guards us against prematurely coming into contact with conditions that we will not maintain. The trouble with men is not that they can not get good and truth in abundance, but that they will not; i.e., they will not give up their evils, which

obstruct the coming of good and truth into their minds and lives. And it is also true that we value anything according to how long, and how earnestly, we have desired it, and worked for it. And thus, by apparent delay, the Lord increases our spiritual strength of character, and renders heavenly things more precious to us.

Need Of Persistency.

While, therefore, the text does not afford a literal parallel between the unwilling friend and our ever-willing Lord, yet it teaches us that, if even selfish men are won over by earnest and persistent asking, we need not doubt the Lord's willingness to give us any spiritual good that we earnestly and persistently desire and seek. But the earnestness and persistency are not needed in order to influence the Lord, but in order to develop our own character. The Inward Meaning: The Friends. In the parable, both of the friends mentioned represent the Lord, but in different aspects. The first-named friend, to whom the man goes for bread, represents the Lord as to good, i.e., as to His Divine Love; and the second friend, who had just come from his journey, represents the Lord as to His Truth, His Divine Wisdom. Truth is the mental way, or path, by which we travel to goodness.

Journeying. A man on a journey represents one who is progressing in the truth, who is using the truth, to attain an object in life. And the truth, itself, is always on a journey, in the minds of men; it is making gradual progress through the man's memory, and through his understanding, into his heart. So, in Nathan's parable to David, it was a "wayfaring man," i.e., a man on a journey, who came to the house, needing food. Thus the truth came to the man's mind, seeking to unite with his good affections. And, as the Lord is the Truth, so the journey of the truth is the journey of the Lord, in approaching a man's mind, and in entering into his mind to abide there.

Midnight. The traveler arrived at midnight. This was not an unusual occurrence in Eastern countries; for, on account of the great heat of the day, journeys were often made at night. Mentally, midnight is a state of ignorance, mental darkness, before the mind attains a knowledge of truth. All men are born ignorant, both naturally and spiritually, and all need to acquire knowledge. But all men have rationality, or the inherent capacity to understand truth, which capacity needs to be opened and developed. The Lord comes to us in His holy truth, when His truth begins to make an impression upon the midnight darkness of our minds. As midnight is the end of one day, and the beginning of another, so it represents a state of mental darkness, or ignorance, just before the beginning of a new state of mind, a new state of instruction in truth, from the Lord. The Psalmist sings, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments." And, while this might have been, literally, a devotional habit with David, it represents the spiritual condition in which the mind arises to higher states, when the Lord's truth comes upon us, in our midnight darkness, and displays to us the righteousness of the Lord. And we remember that, in the parable of "The Virgins," it was at midnight that the cry was made, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him." And when the Lord, as a "friend," comes to us, in His truth, in our midnight darkness, and we begin to have some love for this truth, and some earnest desire to receive it, and to secure the practical good to which it points, then, spiritually, we arouse ourselves, and prepare to receive such truth, and to treat it with hospitality.

Nothing To Set Before Him.

But, on reflection, we see that there is no good in us, in which the truth can feel at home, and which can serve as a base, or support, for this truth; i.e., we find that our friend has come to us, at midnight, but we have nothing in our mental house to set before him. In the light of the new truth, we find ourselves destitute of any good, any profound love for truth, or any practical life of obedience to truth.

And, in this extremity, what can we do? We think of another "friend," who can help us, in our emergency; we think of the Lord's goodness; and we look to Him, to help us to acquire goodness. We see that His truth demands attention and support; and then we turn to His love, to aid us in entertaining His truth. We go to Him, with the acknowledgment that we have received His truth into our mental house, but that we have no good of our own, with which His truth can be united.

Bread. And so we go to Him for "bread," the practical good of life, which shall feed and sustain the new truth that has come to us, and which can give us spiritual nourishment. We ask for "three loaves," for practical goodness, in its fullness, in all degrees, in the will, in the understanding, and in the conduct. For three, as a number, represents fullness, or completeness, especially as to truth.

Here, in connection with bread, it refers to the good of truth, the goodness which is to support the truth. And this we acknowledge that we have not, of ourselves, and in our own mental house; and so we go to our Lord, to borrow it from Him. And we receive from the Lord such good as we are in a state to appreciate. To a great extent, we must take good upon authority, obeying the law because the Lord so commands. This is borrowed bread. But, afterwards, we make goodness our own, in actual life, and from love of goodness, in conjunction with the Lord. But the Lord cannot give us goodness merely for the asking. Truth can be taught and communicated, for the asking, but not goodness. We must, as of ourselves, make goodness by using the truth. Of course, the Lord gives us the goodness; but He can give it to us by our co-operation, only.

Delay.

And, when we first approach the Lord, and seek goodness, He seems to be indifferent to our requests. He seems to say to us, "Trouble Me not." Of course, this is merely an appearance, for the Lord is never indifferent, or unwilling, towards any man, even the most evil. He is always doing all He can do, to give good to men, and to mitigate the self-inflicted sufferings of the devils in the hells. But, when men do not understand the way in which the Lord helps them, they imagine that He does not intend to help them. From Within.

It is said of the friend in the house, "And he, from within, shall answer," etc. Thus, the apparent indifference of the Lord arises from the man's own inward thought, when he sees his own unworthiness, and supposes that God will not condescend to look favorably upon a sinner.

We notice this ignorant state of thought, in men who say they will not join the Church until they are good enough; failing to see that men ought to join the Church because they are not good enough, and because the Church is a means of helping them to become better. No man on the earth is perfectly good. The Door. When a man thinks of the difference between his character and the Lord's character, he often imagines that the Lord has shut the door between them, and will not condescend to re-open it. The door, or doorway, is a means of communicating between two places. In our minds, there are two doors, the natural door, communicating with natural life in the

world, and the spiritual door, opening, towards heaven and the spiritual life. Naturally, the natural door of the mind is open to the outer world; and the spiritual door is shut, until man is willing to have it opened; i.e., until he is willing, by repentance and reformation, to come into a mental state in which the Lord can open the door to the man's spiritual consciousness. But the man often imagines that the Lord is not willing to open the spiritual door. But the Lord has made His Divine Humanity the "Door," through which men may enter into spirituality of life. Jesus said, "I am the Door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." When the door (between a man's mind and heavenly goodness) is shut, the man, himself, is the one who keeps it shut. And yet, in his ignorance of spiritual life, he imagines that the Lord shuts the door. The Bed, Etc. The man in the parable also said, "My children are with me, in bed." Children, as derived from their parents, represent new principles of life, as outbirths of older states, or as new states, succeeding the older ones. The bed, on which we rest, represents the doctrine, on which the mind rests. For instance, in Isaiah 28:20, We read, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it;" i.e., the false doctrine is too short, mentally; it will not allow the mind to expand, and to exercise itself in freedom; it cramps the affections, and restrains the thoughts. The children are in the bed; i.e., the new principles are to be found in the true doctrine of the Church, from the Lord's Word. The Scriptures are not given as formulated doctrine, but as the reservoir, whence doctrine is intelligently and rationally to be drawn; as nature is not exact science, but is the reservoir from which science is intelligently and rationally to be drawn. But, as nature cannot be understood without exact science, so the Lord's Word cannot be understood without true doctrine. True doctrine is spiritual science, which is needed, in order to understand spiritual things. And so the man who approaches the Lord, without proper knowledge of doctrine, does not understand how the Lord can help him to acquire goodness, as "the bread of life." He is often discouraged, because he does not clearly understand the doctrine.

Arising. And so the Lord seems to say to him, "I cannot rise, and give thee." But the fact is, that the man does not "rise" to the clear understanding of the doctrine; i.e., he does not elevate his mind above the region of the natural senses and their plane of thought. God cannot "rise," in the man's mind, until the man is willing to exert himself to rise to higher and more spiritual views of the Lord, and of humanity. God rises, as we lift Him up, in our thoughts and affections.

Thus the Lord first "rises," and then "gives" to us; e., as we lift up the Lord, in our minds, such an elevation gives us new states of life. "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered;" i.e., when we exalt the Lord, in our hearts, our evils and falsities will be scattered from His presence.

Importunity.

"I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth." As already remarked, the conduct here mentioned cannot furnish a literal parallel to the Lord's ways. For "The Lord is good to all, and His tender-mercies are over all His works." He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." But the Lord, though he offers all good to all men, cannot actually communicate good to any man, except in the degree in which the man is open to receive good. The Lord cannot, from His love to men, and as their Divine Friend, give them whatever they outwardly ask for; but He can give them that only, which they inwardly desire, and live for. And their own persistent effort and earnestness will open them to the reception of the

Lord's gifts.

Prayer and earnest effort will not change the Lord, nor make Him any more ready to give; but they will change the men, themselves, and make them more capable of receiving. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But nothing can fill with good and truth the man who has no hunger for goodness, nor thirst for truth. And so the Lord, working in man, first produces in the man a desire for spiritual life; and then this desire makes the man conscious of a longing for goodness. And as the man earnestly seeks goodness, he opens himself to receive it, from the Lord. The mere importunity of the man, in asking, does not, of itself, result in an answer to his prayer; for it is the Lord who inspires the man with earnest desire. But, as the man, in his own consciousness and as of himself, lives for goodness, the Lord can answer his prayer for goodness.

According To Need. And then the Lord can give the man "as many as he needs;" i.e., all the good that he is open to receive; all that he will use. As the man resists and shuns his evil inclinations, he makes room in his mind and life for goodness. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. . . . He will fulfill [i.e., fill full,] the desire of them that fear Him." When a new truth comes to us, as a friend, we can call upon the Lord, as a Friend, to supply us with a corresponding quality of goodness, which shall be the food of the new truth.

Though the Lord is always seeking to communicate good and truth to us, yet He can do so, practically, only when we maintain continued effort of our will to procure blessings, and to shun evils. For the measure in which we receive good from the Lord, is the measure in which we, as of ourselves, practically shun evils. Therefore, in order to attain spirituality of life, a man must be thoroughly interested in such life, and persistently earnest in seeking it; knowing that, thus, he can surely receive all the goodness that he will live himself into.

All we have to do, then, is to shun evils, and do good; and, without fainting, without failing, without fretting, without discouragement, without doubting, learn the truth which points out the good, and bravely go on, practicing the truth until we secure the good. Jesus left us both His precepts and His example.

Waiting. The natural man tires, in waiting (as he supposes) for the Lord's plans to mature. But his own impatience as to results is one cause of the delay. The fact is, that the Lord is always waiting for the man to come into a state to receive spiritual life. With every man, as with Israel on the journey to Canaan, there is a short way to the promised land; and the man may take it, if he will. But men's own a long and evils drive them to wander towards Canaan in round-about way. The short way is the way of obedience to the Lord's commandments.

Earnestness.

Men need more spiritual earnestness, and more persistent effort. These, with right motives, always succeed. "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved;" not only the natural end, or conclusion, but also the spiritual end, the purpose of the ruling-love. For the sake of preserving our spirituality, we must bravely endure all the struggles against our evils. The only permanent earnestness is that which embodies a good purpose in rational action.

One great secret of life is contentment. If we cannot have what we think we want, then we should be satisfied to want what we can have. We cannot have just what we want, for the mere asking; but we can have what we earnestly ask for, by living for it. And, when we do not receive just what we ask for, the Lord will give us what we really need, and are able to receive, profitably to our souls. Often, the Divine Wisdom must withhold that for which we unwisely ask.

Prayer. Our prayer does not need to be constant in external form. There are uses to perform, that will not allow us to be always engaged externally in prayer. There is true prayer in every performance of our uses. Every effort we make to shun evil, and to do good, is a living prayer for the Lord's help. And it is the kind of prayer which can be most readily answered; for the answer is in the strength and support that we receive, to uphold us in our efforts. Thus "ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

29. The Rich Fool.

The Rich Fool.

(Luke 12:16-21.)

Worldliness. The Principle.

Worldliness closes the mind to spiritual life. The man whose affection and thought are absorbed in sensuous life, though he may acquire a competence in worldly riches, yet remains poor as to spiritual riches, and unable to receive, or to enjoy, the blessings of heaven. The Questioner. The worldly state of the man who sought the Lord's aid, is to be inferred from the manner in which he intruded himself upon the Lord's attention. Jesus was engaged in teaching the grand truths of spiritual life. And there were, at the time, gathered together a great multitude. And this man, without being desirous to receive the grand truths of interior life, rudely broke in upon the Lord's teaching, and pushed his petty external affairs into immediate prominence. He shrewdly sought to make use of the Lord's authority, to accomplish his own natural purposes. The Reply. But the Lord met the spirit of the man, rather than the subject-matter of his application: He did not enter into the merits of the case, but He called attention to the inward principle which is apt to underlie all such cases. The Lord came upon the earth, to bring a new dispensation of light and life; and so He did not make Himself to be a judge, or divider, over the civil affairs of men. For these, they had laws and courts. But the Lord came to teach men new spiritual laws of life, which should inwardly fill the minds of men, and influence them to keep all laws of proper authority. Therefore, the Lord rebuked the man who sought to use Him for selfish purposes.

Covetousness. In rebuking covetousness, Jesus declared, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And the word "life" is used, here, in the sense of our existence, and not merely our outward living, or sustenance. The parable shows that covetousness leads a man into a mental condition in which he is not prepared for the life beyond the grave; for, by centering his affection and thought upon sensuous things, he closes himself to spiritual things. In the parable, the rich man does not acquire his riches wrongfully, but justly, by the growth of fruits and grain in his own fields. The point of the parable is not, then, against the riches, themselves, nor the manner in which they were acquired, but against the condition of their owner's mind, towards his riches. The rebuke is not against the possession of riches, but against the worldly love of riches. "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them."

Preparation For Spiritual Life. The purpose of life is to perform uses, and to be developed for the spiritual world, and not to spend all our time and means in the pursuit of earthly pleasures. And the parable includes a warning to those who wish to retire from the performance of uses, to live in mere sensuous life. The use of the Church is to teach men the laws of the Lord, and to show them how to use this life in preparing for the real and permanent life, hereafter; and to lead them in doing good, and in shunning evil.

Church And State. The Lord did not express indifference to the rights of the man who applied to Him for redress in civil matters; but He meant to teach men the great principles on which justice is founded; and to leave to the civil authorities the administration of justice in civil affairs. And so, in other cases, the Lord taught men always to obey the civil laws; to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” and, at the same time, to render “unto God the things that are God’s:” not that all things are not God’s, but that the civil authorities are God’s agents in civil matters. The Church and the State exercise authority on different planes of life. The civil law, in its enactment, interpretation and execution, is in the hands of the civil authorities, as the servants of the Lord for the administration of civil affairs. But spiritual laws are revealed by the Lord, and are explained and applied by the Church. And when men are regenerated, the civil authorities do their work in an orderly way, being influenced by the principles which are taught in the Church, and which are the fundamental principles of all spiritual and natural life, brought down and ultimated on the natural plane, in the civil laws of external life. Thus the Church instructs the civil officers, and prepares them to perform their uses wisely and faithfully. Thus, in the body of the community, as in the physical body of a man, each part has its place and its use; and thus the general health is preserved.

Natural And Spiritual Riches. The lesson of the parable is true, both literally and spiritually; i.e., as to both natural and spiritual riches. If natural riches are not used for a good purpose, they become, to the man who abuses them, curses rather than blessings. In regard to all riches, the point to consider is, what influence have they in the formation of our character? If they are separated from spiritual principles of life, they cannot be of any real profit to us, however great their abundance. In fact, the greater their abundance, the more they excite our sensuous desires, and to the exclusion of interest in spiritual things. “And what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” For all merely natural riches cease to be the man’s property, when his spirit is separated from his natural body; for nothing goes with a man to the spiritual world, but his character. And this is true with the spiritual riches, knowledge of good and truth: if they have been received, and used, in self-love, and not for reformation and regeneration, we shall not retain them, in the spiritual world.

And, in the verses of the context, following the parable, we are taught, in the beautiful comparison to the lilies of the fields, that our Lord cares for us all, and provides for all our necessities, both natural and spiritual.

Troubled By Riches. The rich man, in the parable, was troubled by the abundance of his riches: he did not know what to do with them. He thought he had no room where he could store them away. But, had he no good barns in the needs of his fellow-men? Were there no deserving poor, no unfortunate ones, whose needy homes would have been most excellent barns for his surplus wealth? To the natural thought of the rich man, a plan suggested itself, in the increase of his own barns. And when he should have built larger barns, and stored away all his wealth of fruits, he would have no further care, for, many years. He would eat, drink, and be merry. He would have a fully-satisfied sensuous life. But what would he do for his spiritual life? Was there no need of preparation for the world to come? His Soul Required.

But, while the man is thus comforting himself with glowing prospects of self-indulgence, a messenger knocks at his door. It is a messenger from the unseen world. And he says to the

trembling rich man, Come with me: your natural life must now close, and you must pass into the spiritual world. And what shall the poor rich man do? What can he do? He may object; he may lament; he may rage; but he must obey. There is no resistance to such a call. He must go; and he must go now.

Only his soul is required to go; his natural body may remain in the natural world. And all the things that he has laid up for his natural, bodily life, may stay here, too, with his natural body. His soul has no further need of these physical things; and his poor physical body can no longer use them. They must fall to others. But his soul must go. But in what condition does it go? What preparation has it made, for the life to which it must go? The man felt himself to be well provided for, in this world; but he has not laid up any treasure in the next world; and he now feels no confidence in himself, for the spiritual world, and no desire to enter into it. His affections and thoughts are absorbed in the flesh, and anything beyond the flesh seems, to him, shadowy and unreal. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." The Spiritual Meaning: Riches.

Spiritually, riches are knowledge of good and truth, doctrines and facts known, and stored up in our memory. And a rich man, spiritually, is one who possesses an abundance of knowledge of good and truth, one whose memory is well supplied with true doctrines and facts, which he may use, if he will, in procuring the good which he theoretically knows. The ground of the rich man is his mind, in which the knowledge of good and truth are held. And the quality of the good which these knowledge can bring forth, is the same as the quality of the man's love. If the man's affections are centered in sensuous life, his knowledge, however numerous, can make his mental ground bring forth a large crop of natural good things, only; things good for natural life, only. The ruling-love is the emperor of a man's mental empire, keeping all things in the empire under his control.

Thinking Within Himself. The man "thought within himself;" i.e., he reflected; he exercised his interior thought. In fact, a man's interior thought is his real speech: it is the speech in which the man holds converse with himself, and lays bare, to himself, his own purposes and plans.

Saying, spiritually, means thinking; for outward saying is only expressing our thought. The man said to himself, or thought, "This will I do;" i.e., his thought is aroused, from his will; they are co-operating for the same end. "What shall I do?" is the thought of the understanding; but "This will I do," is the perception of the will, as to how it shall accomplish its ends. So, in the parable of "The Unjust Steward," the steward asks himself, "What shall I do?" and replies, from his will, "I am resolved what to do."

Having No Room. The man in the text says, "What shall I do, because I have no room," etc. He felt natural things to be good and delightful. But, in the increase of his delights, he thought his mind had no room for all the natural good he desired; i.e., his understanding was too contracted to comprehend the apparent good things that he felt to be good. Thus, as a man's will feels new delights, he desires to expand his understanding, that he may understand how to make the most of his new good things. When a new feeling arises, he desires to be able to plan for it, that he may enjoy it.

New states of feeling give him new states of thought; and so he changes his thoughts, to agree with his changed feelings. He tears down his old barns, and builds larger ones; i.e., he extends the

sphere of his understanding and memory, to agree with the new states of his will. An[, in these extended conditions of his understanding, he can store up, and plan for, and enjoy, all the new feelings that have come to his will.

Thus, as a man's ruling-love sends forth a new crop of affections, he enlarges the grasp, and the capacity, of his understanding, in the same direction. For, if a man's heart and his understanding disagree, the man will be divided against himself; and if they fail to co-operate, one lagging behind the other, he will not be in freedom.

Enough Laid Up. And when the man, coming into new states of feeling, correspondingly expands his understanding, until he thinks he knows all about these things, and how to enjoy them, he is satisfied with his condition. He thinks he has enough good, and enough knowledge, to enable him to enjoy himself in his own way. And, in his spiritual ignorance, he imagines that his knowledge of good are already converted into the good things, themselves.

Eating,Drinking,Etc. And he says to his soul, "eat, drink, and be merry." Eating is nourishing the spirit with what is supposed to be good. And drinking is nourishing the spirit, the mind, with truth. And to be merry is to enjoy the delights which are produced by good and truth. But, if the man's knowledge is only abstract truth, not brought out into a genuinely good life, his supposed good is not genuine good. The Fool: The Night.

And, when the judgment comes, the Divine Truth will say to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" A "fool" is one who stores up knowledge in his memory, but does not use them for his regeneration, by shunning evils as sins, and performing uses.

"This night," is this state of inward darkness, or falsity, when the truth, though known as doctrine, is not used as the light of life. "Thy soul shall be required of thee;" i.e., a judgment comes, when a man will be separated from this natural world; and all knowledge which he did not put to practical use, will be taken away from him. For, practically, he will reject all such knowledge, when he enters the other life. They have not formed any part of his real life, and so he will have no real interest in them. His soul will be "required" of him, because he will not willingly leave the natural world of sensuous things, in which he feels at home. Not Rich Towards God.

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, but is not rich towards God." Any man who regards himself, and his own interests, in everything, is rich towards himself, only. Riches are not only money, but also all that money will procure, ease, comfort, sumptuous living, consideration among men, power, influence, fame, etc.; and also intellectual riches. He lays up treasures for himself, who seeks and acquires knowledge of good and truth, for selfish purposes, worldly ends. For such a rich man, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." The Elements Of Evil. In this worldly love of either natural or spiritual riches, there are two elements of trouble: first, an undue love of the world; and second, a distrust of the Lord's Providence. There are men who have so thoroughly enflashed their souls, that we wonder how they can ever feel at home in any other than a natural and sensuous world. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his substance." "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." "O Lord, deliver my soul from men of the world, who have their portion in this life."

Danger Of Mistake.

And, in this matter, a man may fall into a mistake which, like a hidden trap, lies before the unwary. He may say, "I am working for money; but I am not working for myself, but for my children: I want them to be independent." But, there is great danger that he is work for his children in this world, only; for, if he concentrates his affection, thought and effort upon making his children independent, pecuniary, he is very liable to have no zeal for their spiritual interests and training. Whatever he esteems as the greatest good, he will work for; and, conversely, whatever he is most zealously working for, he secretly esteems as the greatest good. Thus, a man often leaves his children rich for themselves, in this world, but poor towards God, and for the spiritual world.

Useful Wealth.

It is right to acquire wealth, honestly, and with the desire to use it for spiritual and natural uses. "Lay not up, for yourselves, treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also;" i.e., treasures of self-love, laid up in the natural mind, the earthly part of our mind and life, feed our evils, falsities and sins, but the riches of regenerate life, laid up in the heavenly part of our mind and life, our spirit, are permanent, and beyond the destructive influence of evils and falsities.

Rich Towards God. To be rich towards God, is to make our riches of knowledge lead us to God, and to use our mental riches for reformation and regeneration. For all heavenly ends and purposes are in agreement with the Lord's purposes. Heavenly riches are riches of character, in love, wisdom and holiness. And he who has the riches of character has, also, the riches of the Lord's blessings, for the Divine blessings come to us inwardly, in the way of character, and not merely outwardly, in the way of external gifts and surroundings. And no man is in mental condition to use the Divine blessings, except as his character comes into agreement with the spiritual quality of those blessings. He is in heaven, who has the principles of heaven in him, in his character. "On those who love such things as belong to Divine and heavenly wisdom, light shines from heaven, and they receive illumination." (H. H. 265.) To gain spiritual life, a man must lose his selfish life, and learn to depend not upon sensuous things, but upon spiritual things, as the indwelling life of all natural things. He must "Seek, first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," knowing that, then, "all these [external things] shall be added unto" him, according to his need.

Love Of Use.

Every man has spiritual life, according to his love of use. And the spiritual love of use is formed, in him, by shunning evils as sins, and by doing good, in the name of the Lord. Thus, the man performs uses, i.e., does good, from spiritual principles. By shunning evils, his mind is opened to the Lord, and the Lord enters in, and disposes the man to do good, to perform uses, which are spiritual uses, when done from spiritual ends.

Thus, while the natural-minded man imagines that all life is in the sensuous enjoyment of external things, the spiritual-minded man knows, by experience, that genuine human life begins, when he rises beyond a sensuous state of mind, and opens his soul to the inflowing stream of the Divine life, which implants heaven in his mind, and fills him with an interior happiness, "the peace of God,

which passeth all understanding” of the merely natural man.

Genuine Natural Good. The good things of natural life are good, in their proper places, and as servants to the spirit. Like fire, they are “good- servants, but bad masters.” But we are foolish, when we fret and worry about them, as if they were our very life. Very few externals are actually necessary to the regenerate man.

But, in using this world for the sake of the spirit, we make the best of both worlds; and then the earth becomes the Lord’s foot-stool, on which we stand, as we reach upwards, towards His throne. “A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.” “Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.”

30. Waiting, with Loins Girded and Lights Burning.

Waiting, with Loins Girded and Lights Burning.

(Luke 12:35-48.) A State Of Preparation. The Point. The force of the parable lies in its warning to men, urging them to maintain a state of preparation to receive what the Lord seeks to give; and to avoid falling into evil, false and sinful conditions, which put them into unreceptive states.

Girding The Loins. In Oriental countries, men wore long, loose garments, hanging down to their feet. But, when at work, or on a journey, they tightened their girdle, or belt, and drew up the long skirt, letting it hang loosely at the waist, so as to leave the feet and knees in a freer condition. This was "girding the loins;" We notice this habit, in the eating of the Passover, as mentioned in Exodus 12:11 : "Thus shall ye eat it; your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand;" i.e., as if prepared for a journey, or for work. The point is, literally, to be in readiness for what is to be done.

But, spiritually, the loins represent the affections. And girding the loins and lifting up the clothing, represent lifting up the truth, from its lower, or natural, aspects, and regarding it from inward affection, and for the good that is in it. Thus, to gird the loins signifies to be in a state of love of good.

Lamps Burning. And to have our "lights [literally lamps] burning," is to be in a state of faith in the truth, and in mental illumination, or intelligence. Lamps, as hollow vessels, represent doctrines, which serve to enlighten the mind, when filled with the oil of love. (These things were considered in the parable of "The Ten Virgins.") Having the lamps burning, is having them in use, and ready for use; i.e., having the truth, in doctrines, well known and in daily use, and ready for any case that may arise. When truths in the understanding are joined with love in the will, or heart, they shine brightly, and maintain our intelligence. Thus our minds are kept under the influence of heavenly principles of life. Heavenly love, as a sacred fire, is kept perpetually burning upon our mental altar. And, in the practical walk of daily life, we acknowledge to our Lord, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The Lord Of The House, And The Servants. The men who wait, are the servants of the household. Spiritually, the man of the house, or lord of the place, is the ruling-love. And the servants are the truths, which serve the ruling-love. Our affections use the truths that we know, to serve their purposes. But, in a supreme sense, the man of the house is the Lord, because He is the real Ruler in every regenerate man's mind, and the regenerate man's ruling-love is a love which flows into him from the Lord. Thus, men, or servants, waiting for their Lord, are the truths which dwell in a regenerate man's mind, ready to serve the Lord. The wedding is the union of Divine Good, or Love, with Divine Truth, or Wisdom. This union always exists in the Lord; and it begins to be formed in a man, when he begins to be regenerated; and it progresses in the degree in which his regeneration progresses. When the Lord returns from the wedding, is when the Lord comes to a man who is entering this wedded state of spirit, in which his love and his wisdom are united, in his devotion to the Lord. The Lord's coming is the approach of the Divine Love to a man's will. And His knocking is the announcement of His Divine Truth to a man's

understanding. And both together constitute the Lord's constant presence with a man. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Opening The Door. To open unto the Lord, immediately, is to turn the will, or heart, to Him. To open the door, practically, is to remove the obstructions, which stand in the way, and which exclude the Lord. And these obstructions are our own evils and falses, and our sins of life. When these are repented of, and removed, we open unto Him immediately, when He comes in His good and in His truth. He finds ready entrance; and thus He blesses the man with spiritual life.

Waiting For The Lord.

It is the man's work to keep the door open to the Lord. All those are waiting for the Lord, who are doing His will, in a daily life of uses; for the Lord can always come in to such a state of mind: it is always prepared for Him. Waiting for the Lord is not, then, merely a mental state of expectation of some outward phenomena, or of some sudden mental change; but it is a state of obeying the Lord's commandments, and performing uses. It is not waiting for something to do, but it is doing what we have to do, and thus keeping ourselves prepared to receive greater life. The light of truth and the warmth of love, flow into the active, working mind. Thus, the best way to wait for greater life, is actively to use what we already have.

Watching.

Practically, to watch is to watch the formation of our character; it is to restrain our tendencies to evil, and to do good, and thus to keep ourselves in a state to know of the approach of our Lord; for the Lord comes to us in every truth that is made known to, us, and in every good that is suggested. And then the Lord can find ready entrance into our minds, and can bless us with more and higher spiritual life.

While we are serving Him, He serves us; while we are open to Him, He flows into us, with all that we are ready to receive. "Verily, I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." And the servants, or truths, in our minds, are blessed, when they are united with good, or love. The Lord finds us watching, when we are spiritually -awake, in intelligent appreciation of spiritual principles, and not asleep in the things of sensuous life. "These things have I said unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." We notice that the duty of watching, or being prepared, is an element in several of the Lord's parables. The Lord Serving Men. The Lord girds Himself, because His Divine Love is always making itself ready to serve men. He makes us sit down to meat, by preparing us to receive the spiritual food of good affections. And He serves us, by implanting His truths in our minds) and by giving us spiritual intelligence. The Watches, Etc. The first watch of the night represents a state of instruction in truth. The second watch is a second state, of joining the known truth with our affections. And the third watch is a third state, of carrying out our good affections and true thoughts, in our good conduct. And if the Lord comes to us in either of the latter two watches, His coming will bless us; for, in either, we are prepared to receive Him.

"If the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (literally, dug under, or undermined, as if the thief dug up, from below). The good-man of the house is the ruling-love. If the ruling-love is

good, it will be watchful, and on its guard against the subtle schemes of evil spirits, who seek to undermine it by insinuating false suggestions. Every falsity is a thief, coming to steal away our good and true things. And evil spirits, like thieves, do not boldly come to us in our clear states of rational and spiritual daylight, but in our natural-minded states, our darker mental periods. They attack us in our weaker states; and they attack us secretly. And, to be prepared for them, we need to be on our guard, and to keep always in mind the spiritual principles of regenerate life.

Night. As the man of the house must retire to sleep, at night, so we must go down into the external uses of our daily life; but, spiritually, if we carry our spiritual principles into our outward work, we shall be on the watch against spiritual thieves. In the parable of "The Tares," the enemy who sowed the tares, did so at night; but, on the other hand, in the parable of "The Seed Growing Secretly," the good seed grew, both day and night. We are, then, to be ready, always, for the coming of the Son of Man, the Divine Truth, by keeping the truth of the Lord's commandments always before our minds, and thus keeping a watch against the secret influence of false doctrines and sensuous persuasions.

For, if we are unprepared, we cannot tell in what hour, or state, of mental darkness, and of spiritual and moral weakness, we may be overcome by evils and falses. There is no safety, except in always submitting ourselves to the guidance of the Lord's good and truth, as revealed in His holy Word. The Steward, Etc. In reply to the question of Peter, who represents our faith, the Lord stated that the truths in this parable are applicable to us all, and to our mental conditions. The wise steward, made ruler over all, is the regenerate natural mind, which is given control over all natural duties and works, because it does the will of its master, the spirit.

But, if the natural mind relapses into evils and falses, and abuses the men-servants, the truths which serve with it, and the maidens, the natural affections of the mind, the Divine Truth will come to it in judgment, and will cut it asunder, or separate it from good, and allow it to sink into its congenial hell. And then, the mind that sins against light, shall sink itself into a deeper hell, while the less the mind perverts its knowledge, the less will be the degree of its self-inflicted misery.

We are warned, therefore, to watch the influences which seek to operate upon us; to see that we love good things, only; and to cherish the truth, to the exclusion of all falses, and to the rejection of all sins of conduct. Thus, guided by the Lord, our natural mind can do its natural work, as the wise steward of our regenerate spirit

We keep our "loins girded" by keeping our affections lifted up to the Lord, and to spiritual ends and purposes. And we keep our lamps burning, by keeping before our thought the truths of the Lord's Word, taught in the doctrines of our Church.

Truths As A System. And one of the most important points, in the intelligent consideration of truth, is that we must keep in mind the truth as a complete system. Thus we can retain the application of truth to all things of our life, in a connected plan.

Illustration. A man, seeking to understand the human physical body, does not begin by studying the organization of a finger-nail; but he first acquires a general idea of the whole body, as a whole, and then studies its individual parts, in their relations to each other, and to the whole system. And, even when a man studies the human physical body as a connected whole, he does not understand man, as a complete being, until he comprehends the human spirit, also.

But, when he understands the spiritual constitution of man, and his physical body, also, then he comprehends what a man is, and sees the relation and connection between his various mental and physical parts.

So, in the study of truth, we must aim to acquire an understanding of the truth, as a connected system, with its various relations and connections. No individual truth exists, independent of its connections and relations with other truths, as no living finger exists, apart from its connections with the body, as a whole. Nothing is intelligently seen as an unconnected fact, or idea, but as the embodiment of some principle. And every principle should be seen, not merely in its natural form but also pointing to its spiritual counterpart and cause, and finally, to its relation with the Lord. The Light Of Truth. To keep our lights burning, we need not merely to memorize a doctrine, but also to know and understand it as a living truth, applicable to our daily life. What we memorize, we may forget; but what we know by experience, as a principle, we do not forget. Axioms, or self-evident truths, we, do not forget, because we see the principle that lies within them. But every truth is an axiom, to the mind that sees in the light of that truth. Every truth is self-evident, in its own degree, and on its own plane of life, and to the mind that is prepared for it.

Spiritual truth, being spiritual light, is intelligible in its own light, only. And if our minds are not in such light, they see the truth in such aspects, only, as present themselves to our plane and degree of thought. And the higher, or more interior, the degree in which we see the truth, the more comprehensive will be our view of it; and the more brightly our mental lights will be burning. The principles which we work into our life, are clear to us. Therefore, to keep our lights burning, we are to take hold of a doctrine, not merely to know it, but also to use it, in practical life; to make it a part of our thought, embodied in our conduct, because loved in our heart. Then we shall have confidence in a truth: we shall see it to be true, as a principle; and we shall keep it before our thought, even in our external states, because we shall be in the practice of the good that is involved in that truth.

Illustration. On some beautiful golden morning, when the sun is bright, and the air is clear, you look from your chamber window, and you see, before you, far away on the horizon, the lofty summit of a distant mountain. You know that mountain: its existence is, to you, a certainty. But, there may come many cloudy, foggy days, when you will not be able to see that distant mountain from your chamber window. But will you, -on that account, looking from your window, on a cloudy day, doubt, or deny, the existence of that lofty mountain? You cannot now see it; but you have seen it; and know it to be there.

Why, then, should you, in your cloudy states of mind, doubt, or deny, the existence of a spiritual principle, which, in your clearest mental states, you have clearly seen and known? Why not keep your loins girded, and your lights burning, even in the darkest of mental nights? Why not keep clearly before your rational thought, all the good and the truth which your Lord has revealed to you, in your best and highest states?

Why not, like Moses upon, the mountain, see the heavenly pattern of the temple of human life, and come down into the level plain of natural life, to build according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain? Having, on the clearest morning, seen the distant mountain, you know the direction from your home to that mountain; and you would confidently journey to it, even on the cloudiest day, when its noble form was obscured to your vision.

Why not, then, in the cloudy states of your mental life, cling to the fact of the certain existence of the Lord's good and true principles, revealed in the light of His holy Word? And why not confidently journey towards the good taught you by the Lord, even when you are in darker mental days? You may always remember the direction of your journey. Your Lord has said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And His commandments will always point out the way.

We know our way about our own house, even in the dark. And, if we live in our Lord's house, we shall know our way about it, even in the night. We always know our way about a principle that we love, and which is a home to our spirit. For, then, we shall understand a truth as a law of life, upon which we spiritually live, as a plant lives by its laws of life.

Laws Of Life.

Men spend much time and effort in studying the principles applying to the breeding of animals, and the raising of crops. And breeders and farmers know that, to succeed, they must know something of the laws of animal and vegetable life. How much more, then, we need to know the laws of spiritual life, by which men are grown, as spiritual and immortal beings. If laws of heredity are important in raising cattle and crops, they are, surely, more important in developing human beings. And he who would seek spiritual life, must keep his loins girded, and his lights burning, while he watches and works for the coming of the Lord, in every revealed truth. He must love the truth, and the good that is in it. And he must be watchful to maintain the truth in its uncorrupted life, and not twisted and perverted by his natural and sensuous tastes and opinions.

Truths Perverted.

Men may wrest truth from its proper relations and connections, and thus make it appear to be very different from its heavenly condition; as you might have a beautiful mosaic portrait of the Lord, wrought by a very skillful artist, placing each little stone in its right place; but, if you should break up the artist's arrangement of the stones, and should rearrange them to form the portrait of Judas, though the stones would be the same, they would present a very different face. In breaking up their original relation and connection, the image of the Lord would be gone from them, and they would be perverted to the expression of an opposite character. So is it, always, of the utmost importance, to preserve truths in their integrity, and as a connected system, as revealed to us by our Lord. Then they will always preserve and present His Divine image; and they will lead us to grow into His image and His likeness. And a competent knowledge of truth as a system, is our protection against the opposite system of falsity.

Illustrations. As a man, by the study of the human body in health, knows the conditions, and thus readily detects disease in a disordered body, so the man who understands the human mind, in its health, and as a system, detects the presence of evil and falsity, and is thus enabled to reject the whole system of falsity. This is meant by binding the tares of the field into bundles, and burning them; i.e., classifying, arranging and rejecting falsities.

Take, for instance, the evil of anger. Everyone knows that it is evil, and that it is a sin, to fly into a passion, whenever one's self-love is wounded. And why do we not keep this fact before our mental eyes, as a spiritual principle? If we would always do this, we should detect the infernal quality of our tendency to anger, and we could put it down, as soon as it arises, and before it could come out into our conduct.

Prepared. With our loins girded, and our lights burning, we are always prepared for whatever the Lord provides, or permits. We are ready to meet the expected and the unexpected. We do not know what the Lord has for us, until it comes. But we ought to do well, whatever we do. A desirable thing may be done so badly as to make it undesirable; as a friendly shore awaits a ship-wrecked mariner; but the method of his landing often changes the shore from a friend to a destroyer. An obscure man at an important post, may do very important work; as a humble switch-tender on a rail-road, may, with one turn of his arm, send a passing train in the right way, or plunge it to destruction. Much depends upon his mind being kept in a state of preparation for his work. And so is it, in all the uses of our life, however apparently ordinary; we cannot tell when any emergency may arise; and when it does arise, the man who is prepared to do his duty intelligently and bravely, is the one who will meet the case wisely. And his state of preparation depends upon his intelligent knowledge of his duty; and, spiritually, upon his comprehensive knowledge of the truth as a system, in its various connections. "A good man shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. . . . He will guide his affairs with discretion."

External And Internal.

Those who live in their externals, looking at the natural side, only, of human life, are often surprised, and sometimes confused, by sudden changes of externals; but those whose interiors are open to spiritual light, and who view human life from its inward side, are prepared for anything that may arise.

They cannot, of course, foresee future facts in outward things; and they do not desire to do so, knowing that such knowledge would take away their freedom; but they know the certainty of spiritual principles; and knowing that everything, both natural and spiritual, must "bring forth after its kind," they know, to a certainty, what must be the outcome of any given principle of life, embodied in the conduct. They know the certainty of the fulfillment of the Lord's gracious promise, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land; and verily, thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

31. The Barren Fig-tree.

The Barren Fig-tree.

(Luke 13:6-9.) Religion Is In The Life. The Vineyard. The “certain man” is the Lord, the Owner of the human vineyard. The vineyard is the Church, in which Divine truths are planted, and brought to practical fruit. “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.” Individually, the vineyard is the Church set up in each man’s understanding.

Trees. A tree represents a principle implanted in the mind. The leaves represent knowledge, things known, in the memory. The blossoms represent the sentiments, or ideas in the thought. And the fruits represent the matured principles, in the life, the good works, which are the outworkings, or fruits, of the man’s principles. Many kinds of trees are mentioned in the Scriptures, especially the olive, the vine and the fig. These three trees represent the three great characteristic divisions, or phases, of human life, called, in the terminology of the New-Church, the celestial, spiritual and natural degrees. These are degrees differing in kind, or quality. In the celestial condition, represented by the olive, the man is governed by a love of good, and by love to the Lord as Divine Good. The man loves good; and he does good, willingly, from love. In the spiritual, or middle degree, represented by the grape-vine, the love of truth is the controlling affection. The man sees the truth of things, rather than their good. And he sees and knows God as the Divine Truth. And, in the natural, or lowest degree of life, represented by the fig, the man regards actions, rather than principles. He does good from a sense of duty, in obedience to the Lord’s commandments.

Fig-Tree. The fig thus represents the lowest, or outmost, degree of human life. All men are in the natural degree, by birth; but the spiritual and celestial degrees are developed in the “new birth” of the re-generation. The natural degree relates to the outward life, and to the affections and thoughts that dwell upon that life. Every man continues to be in the natural degree, as far as his outward life is concerned; but, with those who become spiritual, or celestial, a new degree of life is developed in addition to, and above, or within, the natural degree. Every man carries within him the germs of the spiritual and celestial degrees, which may be opened and developed. In the natural-minded man, the interior degrees are not opened to his consciousness, even when he is regenerating. And his regeneration brings him into a good and orderly natural life, in obedience to the commandments of the Lord. Then his natural goodness will contain, within it, a germ of interior goodness. It will be natural good from a spiritual origin, and held in connection with the heavens. He will be regenerated, as far as his consciousness extends; but his mind will not enjoy the distinctive experience of the spiritual or celestial degree.

Thus, even if a man is merely a natural man, he may become a regenerate natural man. He may keep the Lord’s commandments, and thus “enter into life,” according to the degree of his openness to heaven. But, if he does not keep the commandments, he will be evil, no matter how much he may know about the truth, as doctrine. And a man who knows, but does not obey, the teachings of the Lord, is a barren fig-tree, bearing “nothing but leaves.” The Jewish Church. This was the general condition of the Jewish Church, at the time of the Lord’s first coming. The Jewish Church

was of an outward, natural character. It was, in fact, not a Church, but merely a representative of a Church, its outward rites and ceremonies being figures of the mental life of a real and spiritual Church. But the Jewish Church, though external, should have been in the love and practice of natural good. It had the Divine commandments, and connection with the heavens, through the prophets. The Lord was continually speaking to Israel, in His holy Word, in its literal sense. Thus, the Jews had knowledge of truth, represented by the leaves of the tree. "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations;" i.e., the truths were for practice, that men might be healed of their evils. But the Jewish national fig-tree bore leaves, only. When the Lord came to the Jewish Church, He brought a judgment upon that dispensation. When He came to that tree, He found nothing upon it that could satisfy His Divine hunger for the righteousness of His people. He found nothing but flourishing knowledge, with inward and outward barrenness, as to any practical goodness. And by such knowledge no spiritual manhood could be built up.

Coming And Seeking The owner of the vineyard "came and sought" fruit on the fig-tree. "Came" expresses the approach of the Divine Love, and "sought" represents the effort of the Divine Wisdom, to bring good to men, and thus to find good in men. These two expressions are not merely careless repetitions, nor are they accidental. The Word of the Lord is a communication to men, from the Lord, and it expresses the qualities of His Love and of His Wisdom. And, often, in the letter of the Scriptures, a third expression is added, relating to His Divine Power. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to the bound." These Divine qualities, though united in the Lord, are separated in the thought of men. There is no Divine wrath. God is Love; and His Love is within every manifestation of His Wisdom and of His Power.

Individual Application.

Historically, the parable relates to the Jews; but personally it applies to each individual man who is in the condition represented by the barren fig-tree; i.e., who is full of knowledge of doctrine, but barren of any practical good in life; the merely nominal Christian, who does not live as Jesus lived; who, perhaps, makes a display of outward piety, but does not keep the Lord's commandments. And yet the Lord, as in the parable, tries to save every man, even the worst. He gives every man every opportunity that can possibly be of any use to him. The Vine-Dresser. The Divine Truth declares every such unproductive man to be already condemned. "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come, seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Thus, the Divine Truth expresses condemnation of evil. But the Divine Love, in its Divine Providence, always seeks to save every man. The Divine Providence is the vine-dresser.

These persons, the owner and the vine-dresser, are spoken of as two, to express the different aspects in which men see the Divine Truth and the Divine Providence; but, in the Lord, these are one. Providence is the care exercised from the Divine Love, through the Divine Wisdom, and by the Divine Power. Thus, though men see that, in their evil conditions, the Divine Truth condemns their condition, yet they are taught that the Divine Providence is always operating to the uttermost, to save all men. And so the vine-dresser said to the owner, "Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and, if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." The Fig-Tree. As the fig-tree represents natural good, good in the outward life, therefore,

when this is genuine good, done from good motives, it is from a spiritual origin. Then, the flourishing fig-tree represents the natural man, or the natural mind of man, instructed in the truths of the Church; and whose leaves are knowledge, and whose fruits are the practical good works of a holy life. But when men do works that are good in outward form, but are hypocritical in spirit, their good works are “evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil.” And when a man, beginning to do good acts, ceases doing good, and does evil, from policy, during a temptation, he is “even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.”

Fruit-Trees. The chief characteristic of a fruit-tree is its fruit; and so, with man, the chief point is his good, the actual fruits of his principles. In this good, as in the fruit, is the life principle, the seed, which shall produce more good fruit. And so, every man, like “every tree, is known by his fruit.” “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.” This is a very plain statement of the principle that whatever is in a man, will work itself out in his life. “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.” In Isaiah, the good are spoken of as “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” And, in the first Psalm, it is said of the good man, “And he shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf, also, shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” The effort of the Divine Providence, as the vinedresser, is to care for the spiritual fruits of the vine of spiritual truth, and also to do all that can be done to develop good fruit from every fig-tree, in men’s minds.

Three. The lord of the vineyard had looked for fruit from the tree, for three years. Three represents a state of fullness, or completeness, in regard to truth. In the Jewish Church, and in the individual man represented by this fig-tree, there was no genuine good, in either of the three departments of the mind’s life, the will, the understanding, and the conduct. That tree was filling up the measure of its character. And so the Lord knew it would have, to be cut down; but, before cutting it down, every opportunity would be given for a change in its character.

Unfruitful Trees. The unfruitful fig-tree is cut down, spiritually, when the natural man is destroyed by his own evils. In the vineyard, there is sunlight, heat and moisture, and the vine-dresser’s care; and, if there be any good in the fig tree, it should bear fruit. So, in the Church, a man has every opportunity to do good. The Church is open to him, with all its privileges, its sacraments, and the Word of the Lord. And the man must be at fault, if, amid all these advantages, he bears “nothing but leaves,” and remains unfruitful of any practical good.

Cumbering The Ground. The unfruitful fig-tree is said to cumber the ground; i.e., to be in the way, keeping the ground idle, when the same space would support a good tree. And, when the man of the Church is unfruitful in good, he performs no good use. He is not useful, himself, and he stands in the way of others, who might be of use, where he wastes time; and he injures others by his bad example. But, as long as there is any opportunity for the useless man to repent, or, indirectly, to serve any use to others, the Lord’s Providence operates upon him, as a vine-dresser. To Dig, To Manure, Etc. To dig about the tree, means to instruct the mind; to help the man to investigate; and thus to remove the obstacles that prevent the warmth of love and the light of truth from reaching the man’s mind. To manure it, is to allow the mind to be assailed by evil, in temptation, so that the

man may, through temptation, be lead to repent, and to reform. The manure, as rejected material, signifies evil; but the evils of the devils may be made, like manure, to serve a good purpose to others, in temptation. And yet the evil men will not repent, even if given opportunity. But their life may serve as a warning to others. The Jews, long ago disbanded as a nation, or a Church, have been allowed to remain for centuries, with their characteristics still prominent; perhaps for the good of others, as well as for their own possible good.

We notice that the lord of the vineyard did not reply to the vine-dresser; which indicates that there was no hope of the Jewish Church, as a Church. And in the parallel passage in Matthew, the record states that the fig-tree withered away." This tree had as much of the heat and light of the sun as other trees had, and yet it remained unproductive. And so it is with men; both spiritually and naturally the Lord "makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The Kingdom Of Heaven. The kingdom of heaven is all about us, everywhere. It is the inward kingdom of love, wisdom and goodness. Like the kingdom of light, it is all about the blind man, but he is not conscious of its presence; he is not open to it; and he cannot use its blessings. The whole heavens are working for us, in ardent love, to lead us into a heavenly character. Every truth of the Lord's Word calls to us, in His name, saying, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Perhaps we know what we ought to do, but we have not, as yet, put down our evils to an extent sufficient to make good fruit grow on our fig-trees.

If so, the Divine Providence will have to come to our unproductive trees, and dig about them, and manure them, as a last hope of helping them. The Lord will, give us further instruction, by means of the Church, and by many practical ways, in daily life. And He will permit us to fall into temptations, that we may recognize our real states, and may repent and reform.

Growth. The growth of a tree is not by mere change, but by a well-defined plan. A tree must have something to grow from, some starting-point, some seed, or root. So, in our minds, all growth must have something as a starting point, some seed of truth, some principle, which can take root in our minds. And, as the tree grows, by a definite plan, or law of life, so every truth grows, in our minds, by a well-defined heavenly law of order. It grows from knowledge deposited in the memory, to doctrine understood, and to truth recognized, and to principle loved, and then to good fruit, in our daily life. And it cannot grow to fruit, except through this process.

Again, as the tree must be placed amid conditions of growth, so the truth, in our minds, must be given every opportunity to be warmed by our love, lighted by our wisdom, and protected by our care; i.e., we must do our part to keep it in condition to receive the Lord's love, wisdom and care. And it must be cared for, continually, to keep up the conditions of growth, and to keep away the weeds, and other enemies. Then we shall not be useless, unproductive trees, cumbering the ground which better men and women might more usefully occupy.

32. Taking the Lowest Seats.

Taking the Lowest Seats.

(Luke 14:7-11.)

Humility. The Principle Stated.

Divine Truth sets the regenerate mind in heavenly order. In this order, all the principles of human life are arranged in accordance with their spiritual quality. The Lord is loved first, and as the highest; and the neighbor is loved as ourselves. And this Practically means that, in all the life of the regenerate man, in his heart, in his understanding, and in his conduct, the Lord's principles of love and wisdom, of good and truth, are exalted to the highest place, as the elements of spiritual life in the human soul; and that, in the application of these principles, the interests, the rights, and the desires, of our neighbors, are as carefully guarded and served as our own. That is, we submit ourselves, in heart, thought, and conduct, to the guidance of the Lord's heavenly principles. In such a life, we do not regard persons, but principles; and we love what is good, and think what is true, and do what is right, towards all persons. Good men exalt the Lord, and love their neighbors, as children of the Lord; and, in this exalted state of love, they are exalted in character. But he who supremely loves himself, loves evil, and does not love the Lord or the neighbor. And, in his intentional exalting of his own self-love, he forms in himself an evil character, and abases, or debases, himself. But the good man humbles himself, by submitting himself to the government of heavenly principles; and, in doing so, he opens his heart and life to the blessings of heaven, which then flow into him, and form a heaven in his mind and life. The Literal Sense. The literal sense of the parable is understood in connection with Oriental customs. At Oriental feasts, when a guest enters the room, he first salutes the house. Then, carefully he looks over the company assembled, and, giving due consideration to other guests yet to arrive, he estimates what position he shall take, at the table, according to his rank, and according to his connection with the occasion of the feast. We readily notice that, in such a case, there is every opportunity for a self-seeking man to thrust himself forward, beyond the position to which his actual rank, or merits, entitle him. The scribes and Pharisees were especially inclined to push themselves into too great prominence.

After the guests are seated, the host, or master of the house, enters the room, salutes his guests, and takes his place at the head of the table. Looking along the table, he expects to find each guest in his appropriate place, according to his rank, or his personal connection with the occasion. And if the host sees any guest in a place below that to which his rank entitles him, the host addresses the guest, and says, "Friend, come up higher;" at the same time pointing to the place which he is expected to take. And if that place has been filled, already, the man who occupies it must vacate it, and must, of course, rest under the inference that he has claimed too much for himself.

And, in fact, it is the privilege of the host to honor any one or more of the guests, at his own table, and to place them in a position as high as he pleases to select for them. Therefore, it is best for a guest to be modest, and to take a humble place, and to wait until the host shall call him to come up

higher.

Self-Praise.

Self-praise belongs to a very external state of mind. And the world's experience has originated the maxim, "Self-praise is no recommendation." But immature minds are, at times, so engrossed with their recent discovery of their own developing abilities, that they become forgetful of the abilities, rights and needs of others.

Few things are more disgusting than a confirmed habit of conceited self-assertion. It originates in self-love. And it contains within it, a feeling of contempt for others. Hence it flourishes in unbalanced, and immature, and selfish minds. But, experience and mental growth gradually lift worthy persons out of such a state.

Therefore, while a certain amount of self-assertion and conceit are to be expected in a youth, and while these unamiable characteristics are often especially observable in the early stages of strong characters, yet, in the process of regeneration, they give place to better qualities. And so, a conceited self-assertion, which is not especially deplorable in a very young man, becomes an intolerable weakness, and a serious blemish, in the character of a man of mature age.

Policy.

Looking at the literal sense, only, the parable would seem to savor considerably of worldly policy. From it, a foolish man might feel justified in humbling himself, outwardly, and temporarily, in order that he might be exalted, afterwards. To take a low seat, for fear we should be put down from a higher seat, though politic, is not a virtuous act. Spiritual-minded men do not pretend to humble themselves, for the sake of being exalted by others, as the Pharisees made broad their phylacteries, and prayed in the streets, to be seen of men.

Beginnings. The parable was given to teach the principle of humility. But how shall the principle of humility begin to take hold of a self-seeking man? Only by teaching him to set his conduct in order. And he will do this from whatever motive controls his mind. But every step towards order, and into order, gives him an opportunity to come more fully under the influence of order. Thus, men begin, often, from selfish motives, and finally end in regeneration. For instance; men cease sinning, in act, because they fear hell; and it requires a long course of Divine leading and teaching, before they arrive at the higher state, of shunning evils because they hate the hells, and love heaven. The Lord leads us through many things that are not good and useful, but which are necessary steps in our progress out of evil, into good. There is a wilderness between our mental Egypt and our mental Canaan; and in that wilderness, there are hunger and drought, and wars and pestilence, and flying serpents and giant enemies. The Spiritual Sense. The Feast.

Spiritually, to be bidden, or invited, to a marriage-feast, is to be instructed in truth, which suggests some good principle of life, which we can love and practice, and in which our good affections can be married to our true thoughts. And thus we can be lifted up into a high state of regeneration.

But, when we are invited to a spiritual feast, a feast of good principles, we must not expect that we shall attain, at once, the highest condition, and secure the greatest good. We may be beginners, only. And the principle from which we go to the feast may not be the highest and most interior principle.

Faith And Love. At first, we act from faith, rather than from the higher principle of love. For love is more interior than faith, and the life of love is of a higher quality than the life of faith. Salvation is not by "faith alone," but by love, faith and obedience. It is necessary for us to begin our journey of regeneration by simple obedience to revealed truth. And the life of obedience develops, in us, a faith in the truth. But, far beyond this state of faith, is the higher and holier state of love, love of the good that is in the principle in which we have faith.

But, in our earlier stages of mental progress, much of our work is done in faith. And, at the time, and while in that state, we imagine that faith is the highest principle. And, in placing ourselves at the Lord's table, we imagine that our faith places us in the seats of honor, near to the Lord. But, as our Lord draws nearer to us, He teaches us that love is the "more honorable man," to whom our faith must give place, at the feast of the spirit. The fatal mistake of the First Christian Church was in exalting faith above love, and thus in proclaiming the false doctrine of "Salvation by Faith alone," which corrupted the Church, in doctrine and in life. The Lord is the host, who invites both our faith and our love. But, while we are placing our faith in the highest position in our thought, our Lord, sitting with us at His table, at the feast of the spirit, comes to us, and says, "Give this man place." Our Lord has called our intellect, our understanding, to feast on the Divine Truth. And thus our faith in the truth -takes its place at the feast. But the Lord has also invited our will, our heart, to this spiritual feast. At first, our will, with its love, is modest: it takes its place in a lowly seat. And our faith asserts its supposed superiority. But, at the call of our Lord, we have the fact revealed to us, that our love, which is in our regenerating will or heart, is a "more honorable man" than our faith, which is in our regenerating understanding. In the presence of the Lord, and at His feasts, love outranks faith. And so our Lord says, to our faith, "Give this man place." And, to our love, He says, "Friend, go up higher;" take your proper place, as the leading principle of spiritual life, at the head of the table, and nearest to your Lord. And then we feel a sense of shame, in having long exalted faith above love.

Order. In our greater enlightenment, we see that, in our Lord's creation, there is order and system. It is so in our bodies, and in our minds. In every department of our life, there is gradation, from inmost to outmost, and from highest to lowest. Each affection, and each thought, has its assigned place, in the order of life. And if this order is not preserved, our mental health is disturbed. Physically and mentally the head is above the feet.

Reflecting upon the truth, a man sees that he is merely a vessel, receptive of life from the Lord; and that he has no cause to exalt himself; for he is no more than a tree, or a stone, except from the life that flows into him from the Lord. And the more a man sees these truths, and understands the source of his life, and humbly considers his own nothingness apart from the Lord, the more the Lord can flow in, and fill him with heavenly life, exalting his character, and bringing him into closer union with his Lord, as the source of all life.

Thus, the more humble a man is, the more the Lord can say to him, "Friend, go up higher," nearer to the Lord in character, and more fully in His kingdom. But, on the other hand, the more a man exalts himself, the less he turns to the Lord, and the less he can receive from the Lord. For he is not a friend to the Lord. For the Lord says, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Going Up Higher. When the guest was called to “Go up higher,” it is said, “then shalt thou have worship [literally, glory, or honor,] with them that sit at meat with thee.” The heavenly marriage-feast is a feast whose guests are the heavenly affections and thoughts of the regenerate will and understanding, whom the Lord has called to His table. They all eat of the same spiritual bread, or good, and drink of the same spiritual wine, or truth.

And, in the company of the Lord’s invited guests, the honored guest has glory with those who sit at meat with him, i.e., the ruling-love, drawing nearest to the Lord, is accepted by all the heavenly principles of the regenerate mind, as the guest to be placed in the position of honor, at the table of the Lord, where they sup with Him, and He with them.

Humility. Our association with the Lord, and our worship of Him, are profound according to the profundity of our acknowledgment that we, of ourselves, are nothing. Self-love, by exalting the mere man in his own esteem, actually abases, or debases, him, in character, and places him in the hells. To humble himself before the Lord, means, practically, to submit himself to the government of Divine principles. Hence, the greater our humility, the greater will be our conjunction with the Lord.

Those who are living in the principle of love, are more humble than those who are characterized by faith: celestial angels are in greater humility than spiritual angels. And the power of the angel, from the Lord, is greater, the more fully he acknowledge that, of himself, he is nothing, and that, without the Lord, he “can do nothing.” Of course, humility means inward humility of spirit. Outward humility is only the outward expression of the inward feeling; and, without the inward spirit, the outward form is but a dead body. The humble man kneels, in prayer, not because he imagines that kneeling will make him any better, or excuse his evils, but because he inwardly feels the spirit of humility; and this spiritual feeling expresses itself, by correspondence, in the bended knee and the bowed head.

Humility is the means by which men are withheld from their natural tendencies to evil; for, as the man acknowledge himself to be nothing, and looks to the Lord, and obeys the Lord, the Lord can lead and guide him, and teach him, and also protect him, not only from the assaults of evils, but also from his own natural tendencies to evil. But the self-loving, self-exalting man, rejects the Lord’s guidance and protection, and casts himself into the hands of evil spirits, and indulges his own tendencies to evil.

Humility And Character.

True humility is not fear of punishment, but hatred of evil. Genuine humility is in exact proportion to the elevation of the man’s character; and, hence, it is greatest in the highest angels. Humility is not a gushing sentiment, but an abiding principle of life. It is not mourning over our past sins, but ceasing to commit sin, and living in the good and truth of heaven.

Humility is a virtue, because the good man sees and knows his faults. But the man who sees no faults in himself is sure to be full of glaring faults, although he is priding himself on his goodness. Humility is cheerful submission to the Divine Will. And it is shown in obedience to the Lord’s commandments. The history of the human race is a history of the gradual decline of humility, and of its restoration by the Lord, at His first and second comings. The Most Ancient Church was the most humble, because its people most fully understood their own nothingness, apart from the

Lord. The serpent that induced the fall of man, was the natural senses, in their cold-blooded, crawling life, leading men to exalt themselves, and their sensuous life, and thus to forget their spiritual life. The fall of man was a result of evil. But the Lord has always sought to lift men up, again, into spirituality of life. Exalting self is exalting evil above good, and falsity above truth, in our affections and thoughts. But he who humbles self, and puts his external life in its right place, as the servant of the spirit, thereby opens himself to the exalting influences of heavenly good, and truth.

Humiliation Vs. Humility.

There is a certain kind of humiliation, which is compulsory, when a man finds himself less worthy than others, and when he feels a bitter sense of his inferiority; and, perhaps, envies those who excel him in character or station. But this is not humility. True humility leads a man to look upon his superiors without envy, and upon his inferiors without contempt. When he sees goodness in others, he thanks the Lord for such goodness. And when others see goodness in him, he seeks to live in such a way as to lead other men to praise the Lord, and not himself, knowing that his goodness is from the Lord. Genuine humility is meekness of spirit. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" i.e., they shall gain control of their natural mind, which is the earth of the mind, as distinguished from the spirit, or the heaven of the mind. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to love mercy, and to do justly, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Self-Assertion. The self-asserting man lives in the hells, as to his spirit; but the meek and humble man lives in heaven. Humility does not imply a sad countenance, or a subdued manner, but, a well-disposed heart, and a good life. How different is the ordinary life on earth from the life in heaven. Here, men are struggling for precedence, each trying to get all he can from others. There, each is doing all he can for others; and he finds his happiness in serving. And every man must come into this condition of mind, before he can be in heaven. Naturally we are selfish, and desire the praise of others. We love to have what, cunningly, we call encouragement, but what is, actually, praise. The Practical Meaning. The meaning of the parable is clear enough for our practical use. Every truth of the Lord calls us to draw nearer to our Lord; to come out of our selfishness, and to allow our Lord to form, in our minds, a heavenly marriage of good affections with true thoughts; to feast with the Lord, in His presence; to put down all evil, false and sinful things, and to come into a childlike innocence and simplicity; and thus to allow our Lord to exalt us to higher and higher conditions of spiritual character. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

33. The Excuses.

The Excuses.

(Luke 14:16-24.) Indifference To Heavenly Life.

Summary.

Heaven is always open to him who is willing to attain a heavenly character. For heaven is a condition, and not merely a place. No power can force heaven upon a man who does not love heavenly qualities. The man who does not desire heaven, is not willing to receive it, even as a gift. The gates of the holy city are wide open, and yet all the evil men voluntarily remain outside, precisely as a bad man prefers to remain outside of a good character. And all who voluntarily remain outside of any kind of goodness of character, are unwilling to be introduced into that goodness, even at the invitation of the Lord, Himself.

Feasts.

Among the Orientals, feasts held a prominent place. Great men were expected to give feasts, according to their wealth and position. Marriage-feasts often lasted seven days. At the inauguration of a king, a great feast was made; for, representatively, it was said that the king was the husband of the country. So, at the coming of the Lord, as He was the Bridegroom, and the Church was the bride, it was appropriate that the regenerate life should be compared to a marriage-feast. The "great supper" mentioned in the parable, was the principal meal of the day; not, necessarily, in the evening. In fact, from the nature of the excuses given, there would seem to have been sufficient daylight remaining to enable men to view their land, and to try their oxen. It was appropriate, however, to call this feast a supper, because it was at the evening, or decline, of an old Church, or dispensation. The feast represents the mind's feast in the things of spiritual good and truth, which feed the heart and the intellect. A great supper, or the principal meal, represents a mental feasting in the things which nourish the spirit in its ruling love and its rational intelligence. It is "a feast of reason and a flow of soul," in a good sense. The Certain Man. The "certain man" who made a "great supper," is the Lord, the Divine Man, who sets forth that spiritual feast in His holy Word, with all its good and true principles, which "satisfy the hungry soul with good." "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." The Lord keeps His table ever spread, with a feast of heavenly food for all who are willing to accept His gracious invitation. And the fullness of that feast, and the joy of partaking of it, we can know by experience, only. Here, in His holy Word, is everything necessary as food for the human soul. All varieties of good affections and true thoughts sustain the heart and the intellect. This is the feast, at which those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" "shall be filled." The Invitation. In a general way, the Lord invites all men to His heavenly feast, by the teachings of His holy Word; and he who hears the Word may always consider himself as invited. But, when the man is in condition to profit by a nearer approach of truth to his mind, some particular truth, as a servant of the Lord, comes to him, and

announces to him the readiness of the heavenly feast, and the special invitation of the Lord, to him. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, come." With One Consent.

But, in the parable, the invited guests "all, with one consent, began to make excuse;" not by an agreement, or collusion, but by a common purpose. There was a consensus, a unanimity of purpose, and, therefore, a unanimity of results. All over the world, like causes produce like results. Beasts and birds of the same kind have similar habits. The robin sings the same song, and builds the same kind of nest, wherever it dwells. So, minds with the same kind of ruling-love, though unseen and unknown to each other, speak and act by a consensus, a common purpose. Those who do not love the good and true principles of heaven, do not wish to be united with the Lord, in a spiritual feast.

Self, in its myriad forms, has an inward quality of character, common to all its varieties; and it speaks from a common antagonism to goodness, and a common indifference to truth. The truths of the holy Word may have been planted in the natural mind, but the briars and thorns of sensuous life have sprung up, and have choked the Word, and rendered it unfruitful.

Historical Application.

Historically, the feast was spread before the Jews, in the Old Testament Scriptures, which opened a communication between heaven and earth. And the Jews, having the light, should have walked in the light. But, from various worldly and selfish purposes, they almost all begged to be excused from the heavenly feast, which their sensuous souls could not appreciate.

Three Excuses. In the parable, only three excuses are given; and yet it is said that all those who were invited wished to be excused. These three excuses are characteristic of the three general states of unregenerate men; and all particular excuses would be classified under these three general heads; viz., excuses made by those who are in false doctrines; by those who are in evil affections; and by those who have conjoined evil and falsity in their bad lives. The First Excuse. The first man had "bought a piece of ground," [literally, a field,] and he wanted to "go and see it." The field, in which the seeds are sown, represents the mind, in which truths are sown. Here, the reference is to the intellectual side of the mind. The man was invited to the grand feast of truth and good, in the Lord's Word. But he had no appetite for such food. He had already been attracted by some false principle, and he had bought it, adopted it, as his own; and now he wanted to go to it, with his affections, and see it, more fully, in his thoughts, that he might confirm it. He wanted to make it fully his own. He was more interested in it than in the good and true principles of the Lord's Word. Therefore, he could not go to the Lord's feast. And when a clear truth, as a servant of the Lord, announced to him his practical duty, he acknowledged his original intention to accept, but begged to be excused, at present, because he was pre-occupied with his own selfish concerns. The Second Excuse. The second man had bought five yoke of oxen, and wanted to go to prove, or try, them, before closing the bargain. Oxen were used by the Orientals in all their agricultural labors. And it was important to test oxen on sale, to see if they were well-trained, and strong, and healthy. The ox represents the natural affections, the every-day feelings with which we work our way along through life. In good men, the oxen of the mind are the good natural affections; but, in unregenerate men, the oxen would represent evil natural affections, selfish and unregenerate. They are the natural lusts of evil, which are not willing to go to the Lord's feast.

These oxen were yoked in pairs, or joined together in their work, co-operating, in a common purpose. Five yoke would be ten oxen. Ten here represents all the unregenerate affections of the natural mind. So, our ten fingers, and ten toes, represent all the duties of our natural life, which flow forth from all our affections. To prove these mental oxen, these natural affections, is to operate them, to indulge them, to see how much delight we can secure from them. And when we are indulging our evil natural affections, we beg to be excused from going to the Lord's heavenly feast. The Third Excuse. The third man had married; and he thought he ought to be excused from any prior engagements. In fact, he did not ask to be excused, but said plainly, "Therefore I cannot come." The heavenly marriage is a mental marriage of our good affections with our true thoughts, the union of our regenerate will and understanding, in the grand purpose of regeneration. But the opposite to this is the infernal marriage of our evil affections and our false thoughts, the union of our unregenerate will and understanding, in the common purposes of selfishness. Those who are in this condition are averse to any heavenly feast; and they plainly say, "I cannot come." They are pre-occupied. They prefer their own feast.

Pretexts.

Now, in the literal sense, these excuses were pretexts, for men who did not desire to attend the feast. The land could have been seen on the next day; and the oxen could have been proven on the morrow. And, if the wife could not have been taken to the feast, there would not have been any difficulty in the husband fulfilling his engagement; for in those days, and in that country, women were regarded as inferior to men, and they had very little to say about what was to be done. None of these excuses would have been offered by men who desired to attend the feast. Or they could have arranged these matters so as not to interfere with the previous engagement of the feast. But this fact makes these excuses better represent the excuses of the unregenerate man, when called to the heavenly feast of good and truth. These three excuses cover the whole catalogue of our excuses, to-day, in our efforts to justify ourselves in our indifference to spiritual matters; the needs of business, the work for property, and domestic cares. How large these things seem to be, on a Sunday morning, to a man, or woman, whose mind is fixed on external matters. Notice, too, that all these excuses come from our natural inclinations, and not from our judgment; they are not logical, but easily refuted. They are not honest. The Literal Lesson.

Literally, the parable does not deal with unlawful things. It was right for men to buy new fields, and to see them; and to buy new oxen, and try them; and to marry. But, in the literal sense, the lesson is against allowing our minds to be so pre-occupied with natural matters, as to make us neglect spiritual things. But, in fact, the temptation is more subtle, because we do not recognize it to be a temptation.

But, after all, what underlies all this pre-occupation of the mind in outward things? Self. Self is what alienates us from the Lord, and makes us either opposed, or indifferent, to the Lord's feast. There is another way of buying a field, as in the parable of "The Hidden Treasure," where the man purchased the field of truth because it contained the great treasure of golden goodness. And there is another way to go to the plow, with our oxen, and not to look back to the things of unregenerate life. And there is another way to marry, in which we shall not be drawn away from heaven, but, in the marriage of goodness with truth, be led more and more fully into heaven. The Second Company Invited. When all the invited guests had sent excuses, "that servant came, and showed

unto his lord those things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out, quickly, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." These were the classes who were generally beggars, who are very numerous in Oriental lands. The anger of the master is stated, to represent the opposition that exists between good and evil. The Lord is not angry against evil men; He is Love, itself. But the offending natural man naturally imagines that the Lord is angry. At the Oriental feasts, when the invited guests had satisfied themselves, they promptly left the table; and, if any food remained, anyone passing by, or any poor man who came to the neighborhood, being attracted by a knowledge of the feast, would be invited to sit down, and to partake. And this went on, until all the provisions were consumed. Nothing carried to the table was taken away, again; but even the beggars were called in to consume the remains. And so, the condition of things named in the parable was not at all unusual.

Representative Meaning. In a certain representative sense, those invited to the feast were the Jews, who had the Lord's Word; and the others, who came in when the Jews refused, were the Gentiles, whom the Jews regarded as outcasts. A city, built up for the homes of men, represents a system of doctrines, built up in the mind. The holy city, New Jerusalem, is a system of true doctrine, coming down from God, out of heaven, to the minds of men. The streets and lanes of the city, the ways by which men pass -about, represent the mental ways, the truths of doctrine, in their greater and lesser forms, in general and in particular. These truths are in the letter of the Word of the Lord. When the servant of the Lord, the Divine Truth, calls to our natural affections, and announces truth to our natural understanding, and these are so pre-occupied with their own matters that they decline to attend the feast of the Lord; then, in His loving providence, the Lord sends out His servants, again, to call to His feast all who are in a Gentile state, uninstructed, but well-disposed. Thus the Word of the Lord goes out to all men, seeking to save all. Wherever there is any knowledge of the Word of God, the truth, as the Lord's servant, enters into the mind that knows the Word, and calls that mind to the heavenly feast of regenerate life. The Third Company.

Those who are in "the high-ways and hedges" are outside of the city, in the suburbs; and these represent those who are out of the Church, and without a knowledge of the Lord's Word. And at the Lord's feast, there is room for them all, if they will depart from evil and do good.

Personal Application.

And, in an individual sense) our Lord sends the truth to our ruling-love and its leading thoughts; and when they refuse to go to His heavenly feast, He still sends the truth to our minds, to arouse, if possible, whatever there is, in us, of a Gentile state, disposed to listen to the truth. In our natural self-esteem, we regard the things of our self-hood as the best things within us; but we finally learn that, after all, the things which we have thought to be mere poor, lame, maimed, and blind things, the outcasts of our minds, the simple, childlike, Gentile states of our minds, are the things which attend the feast of the Lord, to take the places rejected by our self-exalting feelings and thoughts. In our unregenerate state, we despise the beginnings of a better life; and yet our Lord succeeds in saving us from our own evils, not by means of our mental scribes and Pharisees, strutting in their supposed glory, but by the despised things of an humble, gentle, childlike state, which the Lord's truth finally develops within us. Of course, the ruling-love must be regenerated; but it will then be a very different quality of love from that which characterized our earlier states of life. Those persons,

and those principles in us, which feel poor in their humility; and which are maimed by the adulterated quality of their goodness; and which are halt, or lame, in their ignorance of genuine truth, by which mentally to walk; and which are blind, in their inability to see the truth; these, even in their wretched condition, are more receptive of heavenly help, and more disposed to receive that help, because they know and acknowledge their own ignorance and unworthiness. None are so hard to feed, as those who have no sense of their need.

Compelling.

It is said that the servant was instructed to “compel” those in the highways and hedges to come in. Evidently, the power used was not physical force, for what could one servant do, to drive into the city, and into the house, a horde of beggars and wanderers mostly disabled? The force used was simply entreaty. They were not compelled against their inclinations, for they would be glad to go. Their disinclination, if any existed, would be because of their confessed unworthiness, or their unrepresentable condition. They would need the gentle compulsion of encouragement, and assurance of welcome. And does not our Lord, in His holy Word, constantly compel us, in the same gentle way? Does He not compel us to see that His love covers us all? Does He not say to us all, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?” “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” The Lord gives men an invitation, by addressing their understandings; and, afterwards, He repeats His invitation, by addressing their hearts. The parable bears a close resemblance to the parable of “The Marriage of the King’s Son,” but the two accounts were spoken at different times, and are not identical. And there are marked differences between the particulars taught in them.

Those Who Accept. In the text we have noticed that the higher classes rejected the Lord’s invitations; but “the common people heard Him gladly,” for their minds were not pre-occupied with “the traditions of the elders,” and the love of power and place. The truth was “hidden from the [self-styled] wise and prudent,” and was “revealed unto babes.” The spiritual marriage of regeneration is attainable by those, only, who join good and truth in a good life; and not by those who know the truth, but fail to do it. “He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away.” “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Those who are filled and satisfied with self-love “do not know what inward satisfactions are, because they do not read the Word, and look to the Lord; but they only know what outward things are, in which alone they delight. Of internal satisfactions they are not receptive” (A.D., 1162). The Lord gives, to every man, all that the man will receive of heavenly life.

Excuses Vs.Reasons. Of course, we must carefully distinguish between mere excuses and reasons. A man may have a good reason why he cannot do certain things, which he would like to do. Reasons are generally affirmative; they show cause. But excuses are generally negative, showing a lack of interest.

We can see how a pre-occupied state of mind induces men to be indifferent to the truth, as, for instance, it comes to them in the teachings of the New-Church. The mass of men have their minds pre-occupied with their sensuous desires and plans. They feel no hunger for anything spiritual. Others are pre- occupied with their own ideas, prejudices, pride of opinion, lust of originality, etc.;

which so, fill their minds that they have no room for spiritual truth. Others have so confirmed the prevailing theories of the different sects, that they do not expect any new truth, and are satisfied that no new truth is to come to men. Others are pre-occupied with the theories of natural science, and are contemptuous towards any suggestion of spiritual things. And so, from various causes, we hear the same old cry, to-day, in the Lord's Second Coming, that was made in His First Coming, "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on Him?" Of course not; their minds are pre-occupied. And they are rejecting the Lord, now, as they did then, because He comes in a way unexpected to them. Our Excuses. Does it seem impossible that men should reject the Lord's invitation? Look at our own lives. Every truth that we know is a standing invitation to the Lord's feast. And every time we do what is not as good as we know how to do, (and can do, if we will) we reject the Lord's invitation, to the extent of our failure. Peter felt sure that he would not deny the Lord; but he did deny Jesus, and repeated his denial. Have we not some habits which we do not want to give up; some so-called small vices? And do we not, sometimes, speak of these habits, as excuses for not fully accepting our Lord's invitation? Are we not, then, willing to reject the Lord's feast, for our habits? Are we not so preoccupied with our habits that we neglect the Lord's feast?

How easily we find excuses for what we do not desire to do. And how the habit of making excuses grows upon us. How often we think we would like to accept the Lord's invitation to greater spirituality of character, but the invitation seeing to come just at the wrong time, when we are so very much pre-occupied with worldly and selfish plans, that it would be especially inconvenient at present, to follow the Lord very closely. We say to the truth, For this time, we pray thee, have me excused. But it will never be convenient for our self-love, and our love of the world, to lose their control over us. We must go to the Lord, for new impulses, and for a new direction for our feelings and thoughts. The Good Time Coming.

Men talk about the "Good Time Coming," and long for it, instead of working for it, by shunning evils, and going to the Lord, to feast in the things of heaven. The good time is now, if we will to have it so. It is one thing to possess great privileges, and another thing to use them wisely. An invitation is not equivalent to participation in the feast, either socially or spiritually. Many things may occur, to prevent our attendance. Character is what fits a man for the spiritual feast, or excludes him from it. The practical acceptance of the Lord's invitation is obedience to His commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." All disobedience to the commandments is a practical rejection of the Divine invitation to heaven. The Lord's invitations are always for the present. "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Son, go work, to-day, in My vineyard." Worshipping the Lord does not consist merely in going to church, but in shunning evils, and in doing good. Sometimes, the popular and elegant church is pleasant to us from merely external reasons. It is as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Coming to the Lord is coming out of evils. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in, through the gates, into the city." "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

34. Building a Tower, and Making War.

Building a Tower, and Making War.

(Luke 14:28-33.) The Cost Of Regeneration.

Summary.

Self-love is the devil, the great enemy, against which, in its many forms, we have to contend. And, in our warfare against self-love, we have need to count the cost of the conflict, to know whether we are prepared to engage in it, and whether we can carry it to completion. And it is wise to know its requirements and its dangers, that we may not misunderstand what lies before us, and may not lose courage during its progress. The work of regeneration is a complete reorganization of our conscious mental life. It is an abandoning of our cherished affections, thoughts and conduct, and the adoption of new motives, new plans, and new habits. The Double Parable.

Although in the literal sense, there is no intimate connection between the two parts of this double parable, yet such a connection clearly appears, in the inward, or spiritual, meaning. The first part, about the tower, regards what we have to do, and whether our resources are sufficient for the work. And the second part, about the war, relates to what others are doing against us, and whether we can overcome their opposition.

Thus, at the outset, the man is called seriously to inquire concerning himself; first, whether he has sufficient knowledge of the truth to guide him in seeking regeneration, and sufficient sincerity of heart to persevere in doing the truth; and, secondly, whether he will be able to meet, and to overcome, the continued assaults and opposition on the part of evil influences, both in his own natural and hereditary inclinations, and in the persons of evil spirits. For, the more earnestly we seek regeneration, the more persistently all evil influences combine to break us down, and to destroy us. But the Lord guards and guides us, as far as we are willing to accept His guidance, by learning His truth, and living according to it. The Tower. A tower had two uses, observation and protection. The height of the tower gives opportunity for observing the approach of an enemy; and its strength serves for defense, when attacked. The tower represents interior truth, truth elevated above the surface of things, and giving a higher point of thought, and, hence, greater protection against evil and falsity. In an elevated state of thought, from the stand-point of interior truth, spiritual truth, the rational mind, as a watchman, sees and comprehends the state of things, and views the approaching dangers of sensuous life. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." And so, when evil assaults us, we seek safety in our understanding of interior truth, truth raised to a high stand-point, elevated above the outward appearances of things. In such truth we find safety and protection. For, by understanding the inward principles which govern the various things of human life, we are forewarned, and also protected, against superficial and worldly views and thoughts. Any man who understands the spiritual causes of things can readily comprehend the outward embodiments and manifestations of such causes. The tower, then, represents interior truth. And, as the tower is built of stones,

successively placed, one upon another, gradually elevating the structure, so, our mental tower of interior truth is gradually reared above our senses, by placing in it, one after another, the literal truths of the Lord's holy Word, understood rationally, and in the light of spiritual truth. As we comprehend a literal truth, and see its inward phases, we elevate it above the region of our senses; we build it into our mental tower. And when we have built the essential haws of life into a complete structure, an orderly system of rationally understood principles of interior life, we have our mental tower complete. From its height we can look down upon the life of the senses, observe the approaching dangers, and prepare ourselves to meet and to resist them. A man "intending to build a tower," is, then, a mind purposing to elevate its understanding of the truths of the Word of God, so as to form a system of interior truth, for spiritual knowledge, and for protection against evil. Now, when a man purposes to build such a tower, he should first sit down, and count the cost of it, to see whether he is able to finish it; i.e., he is to consider the quality of interior truth, and rationally to see whether his mind is prepared to enter fully into the understanding of interior truth, and to follow that truth to its legitimate results.

Illustration. For instance: natural scientists, who view everything from an outward stand-point, and who see in the light of the senses, very often imagine that they fully understand human life, when the fact is that they have never elevated their minds above the natural plane of thought; and, in fact, they often deny the existence of anything higher than the natural plane of life. Such minds are not in condition to build a spiritual tower; they have not the mental means to finish it. And their mental action, in attempting to view spiritual truth from the plane of the senses, is, when seen in spiritual light, shown to be as unwise as that of the man who begins to build without estimates of expense, and who is not able to complete his building.

Building The Tower. The spiritual tower, which is to stand through eternity, should be built carefully and strongly, as well as in an elevated position. The tower is begun, when we learn the truth; and it is carried upward, as we understand the truth; and it is completed as we love the truth. And then it is used, as we practice the truth, in its higher and more interior aspects. Interior truths, truths rationally understood and loved, elevate our minds into conjunction with the Lord.

Counting The Cost.

Now, when we intend to build this spiritual tower, to elevate our understanding of the truth into spiritual light, do we recognize the cost of such building? Many persons, during church-revivals, think they are converted: but a large majority of such converts back-slide into the world, again. Were they not sincere, at the time? Yes; but they did not count the cost; and they undertook what they could not sustain and complete. They had an emotional interest in the truths of the Divine Word; but, by and by, when tribulation and persecution of their natural desires arose, because of the new truths from the Lord's Word, they were offended. Like the seed sown on stony ground, and with no depth of root, their conversion withered away. They were not willing to give up self-love. Regeneration was too costly for them.

And, in fact, regeneration costs us more and more, the further we rise in it. The reason why one man is regenerated to one degree, and another to a higher degree, is that the latter is willing to endure the greater cost, spiritually; i.e., he is willing to cast out selfishness to a greater degree. It costs more, mentally, to be spiritual-minded, than to be natural-minded; and it costs more to be celestial than to be spiritual.

Mocking Us.

Now, if we begin building our mental tower by thinking of truth, and do not complete it by loving and practicing the truth, our evils and falsities will mock us; they will bring truth into contempt, in our natural minds. We shall be sinning against light, and, therefore, more censurable than if ignorant.

Resisting Attacks.

Now, if we have a knowledge of the truth, as material for building the mental tower, and a determination to build, in the love and practice of truth, a further question arises: are we able to stand against all the assaults that will be made upon us, from within, by our own inclinations towards evil, and from without, by evil spirits, and by bad men on earth. The Two Kings.

“What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand.” The first king is the truth, as ruler of the regenerating mind. And the king against which he goes, is falsity, which rules in the unregenerate natural mind. The Soldiers. The “ten thousand” soldiers of the truth are the “remains,” states of good and truth stored up in the man’s interior mind, by the Lord. These are the means by which the man fights against the falsities that assail his thought. For, if a man has no good and truth in his mind, from the Lord, he will not fight for good and truth, nor against evil and falsity. The “twenty thousand” soldiers of the other king, or falsity, are all the sensuous states of evil and falsity, in the natural mind, which oppose the advance and triumph of the truth, in building up the regenerate life. And these sensuous states appear to be twice as numerous as the good and true things of the spirit. Twenty, as twice ten, represents “remains” of a superior kind. But in the parable, being used in a bad sense, twenty signifies the perversion of such “remains,” the sensuous evils and falses which destroy “remains.”

‘The war that is waged between the two kings, truth and falsity, is the series of temptations, which come upon the regenerating mind; and by means of which our evils are seen and known; and which thus afford us opportunities to overcome evil, and to confirm ourselves in good. By means of temptations the interior mind is opened.

Sitting Down And Counting. In each part of the parable, the person is said to “sit down,” to count the cost, etc., and to consult, etc. Sitting, as a more fixed position than standing or walking, relates to the state of the man’s will, or heart. We sit down in a principle, when we fix our affection upon it. And to “count the cost,” and to “consult,” refer to the intellectual effort, when the thought is fixed upon the principle involved. To distinguish these different mental conditions, the conduct, the thought, and the affection, it is said, in the first Psalm, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” A man sits down and counts, or consults, when both his will and his understanding are engaged in the work. The intellect counts up, for the heart; and the heart, in fixing its affections, consults the intellect. In this consulting, the mind is able to see something of the quality of its own motives, purposes and plans. And we attain conjunction with the Lord, by His Word, in the degree in which we fight against our own tendencies to evil and falsity, as made known in the light of the Lord’s Word. The Warfare. The religious life is a constant warfare against our lower nature. And we are forewarned of the trials that beset us; and thus we are forearmed, to meet these trials. We have

need to understand the system of truth which arms us for the fight, and to look to the Lord for strength to maintain the war.

Seeking Peace.

If we are not in thorough earnest, in the work of regeneration, we shall be alarmed at the power of our evil inclinations, and we shall try to make peace with them, without actually casting them out. Like the king who cannot contend against the advancing enemy, we shall send an ambassage, and make terms with our natural evils, and try to substitute outward piety for inward principle, embodied in outward obedience to the truth. "Whosoever he be, of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." He must renounce all his old life of selfishness, and not attempt to make peace with it, under cover of outward piety. The Cost.

We should ask ourselves the actual cost of regeneration. Spiritual life is the free gift of the Lord. But we must, as of ourselves, work for this gift. We are ignorant, and we need instruction from the Lord. The Lord's commandments are the outward laws of human conduct; and, when rationally understood, they are also seen to be the inward principles of all life. Truth is free; but it must be learned. Our regeneration must, then, cost us the labor of learning the truth, and of unlearning the wrong ideas that we have imbibed. And, again, regeneration will cost us self-restraint. And this is a very heavy cost. There is no way to attain a virtue, but by ceasing to indulge the vice which is opposite to that virtue. For instance: honesty is acquired, by starving out our natural tendency to be dishonest. A good temper is acquired, by continued control and resistance to the inclinations of a bad temper.

Again, regeneration will cost us the giving up our self-will, and of our self-intelligence. We must learn to rely, not on our own will, nor on our supposed intelligence, but upon the good which the Lord gives us, in our practice of His truth, and upon His revelation of truth.

Regeneration will cost us our self-righteousness. We need to learn that we are not perfect, but inclined to evil. Again, it will cost us our bad habits, which must be given up. They must go, with the old life that formed them. Their giving up must be full and unconditional, without any attempt to save our favorite sins, or our little sins.

Again, regeneration will cost us our love of the world's praise. We must work for character, not for reputation. As we rise above the world's standards, we forfeit its sympathy; for the world never forgives those who condemn its evils, and disturb its sensuous pleasures. We must be ready to hear the world turn against us, and call us enthusiasts, cranks, or hypocrites. The man who builds his mental tower above the surface of the world's life, must expect to be misunderstood and disliked. Again, regeneration will cost us many of our worldly plans, which, being based on self-love, must be abandoned. The Calculation.

Now, does this cost seem too great? Do we doubt whether the gain balances the cost? If we are not in earnest, we shall not accomplish anything. If the Lord is not superintending our building, it will amount to nothing. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain, that build it." In our unregenerate states, we are animals, with undeveloped human capacities. By regeneration, we become angels; but, without it, we become Satan or devils. Is not regeneration, then, worth all it will cost us? Regeneration is the practical work of putting away the infernal tendencies of our character. In an unregenerate state, we imagine it to be a great loss, to part with our evils. But,

after we part with them, we see that we are happier without them; and that parting with evil is like parting with physical disease, a thing to be eagerly desired and sought. Our physical body seems to be an essential part of us, and necessary to our happiness; but, in the spiritual world, being in a full spiritual body, we shall never miss our natural body; and we shall be vastly freer without it. So, without our natural unregenerate life, we shall be far freer and happier. Thus, the costs of regeneration are apparent, rather than real; regeneration is costly to our selfishness, but the things that we part with are worse than useless. The cost of the work reveals the nature of it, and the means of doing it.

Sometimes, a superficial person says, "I wish I had not made any attempt at regeneration; for, the more I try, the more trouble I have just as I think I am doing well, spiritually, some evil comes up, in me, that I never knew of, before. I had more rest, before I began to try to do right." Of course he had; but what kind of rest was it? It was a false security, which was not aware of the existing danger. It was the fancied security of the blind man, walking into a pit which he did not see. And now he knows the danger; and of course, he cannot rest, until he escapes it.

Spiritual Temptations.

Spiritual temptations come to regenerating men, only. Others have worldly anxieties; but no one has spiritual temptations, until he is fighting for his spiritual life, and against his own evils. If the tree can be made to bear good fruit, the Lord "purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." It is said of evil men, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." But a regenerating man is changing, in character; and trials are the means by which he changes. The sick man is told that restored health can come to him, only with reformed habits of life. Of course, it is a trial, to him, to break off his old habits. But it is worth while. Gradually his blood is improved, and his health restored. So is it, spiritually; as the man reforms his life, gradually his old affections, thoughts and conduct, give way to new ones; and he becomes a new man. Good can come to us only as we resist evil. There is no other way to secure spiritual good. A man cannot serve both God and mammon, at the same time. We cannot take into heaven anything that partakes of evil; for evil is hell. If we go to heaven, we must leave all the hells behind us. And to go to heaven means to go into the understanding, love and practice of heavenly principles of life. And practically, this means that we are to put away our faults, and to acquire the opposite virtues.

Encouragement.

Now, in the light of these truths, we can see that it should be encouraging to a man, to find himself in spiritual temptations; for it indicates that he has an earnest interest in spiritual principles, and that he is regenerating. If not, he would yield to evil, and not resist it. The greater the trial, the greater the spiritual gain, when we resist the evil.

And, if we only stand steadfast, there is no danger in temptation. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is the Lord who really fights for us, and in us, against evil: and nothing can conquer Him. And nothing can conquer us, if we stand on His commandments. In His merciful providence, our Lord permits no man to enter "interiorly into the truths of faith, and the goods of love, except so far as he can be kept in them, to the end of his life" (D. P., 232). And there is compensation in all trials. If it were not for the darkness, we should know nothing of the stars. All things tend to the spiritual good of Him who works for good. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as

keep His covenant and His testimonies.” As soon as the man learns to hate evil, it ceases to be hard to give up evil. The parable shows us that the life of regeneration is no light matter, to be accomplished in a moment of enthusiasm. It is a life-work: and “he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

35. The Lost Sheep.

The Lost Sheep.

(Luke 15:3-7.) The Lord's Saving Love. The Divine Love. The Divine Love is a love of giving. The Lord, Jesus Christ, came on earth to save those who were lost in evil and sin. He came, not in any scheme to avoid the consequences of Divine wrath, for the Divine character is incapable of wrath, or of any other unloving and unlovable quality. And God is one, in essence and in person. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the same person as Jesus Christ of the New Testament.

But, in the two different dispensations, the Israelitish and the Christian, two different aspects of the one Divine person are made prominent. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three different phases of the one Divine character, a trinity of principles, in one person. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, thy God, is one Lord." And Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." The parable is a beautiful illustration of the character, or quality, of the Lord's love.

Scribes And Pharisees. When the Pharisees and scribes said of Jesus, "This man receiveth sinners," Jesus substantially replied, in the parable, "Yes, I do; just as you would, if any of your property should be lost. These are My sheep; and I come to seek and save that which was lost." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The self-righteous Pharisees and scribes despised and hated the sinners, and the publicans, or gatherers of the Roman tax, some of whom were renegade Jews, who, for money, served the Roman conquerors, against their own Jewish nation. To the self-exalting Pharisee, righteousness seemed to require a man to stand apart from all sinners and outcasts, and to have no association with such persons. But, to the Lord, righteousness was in having intimate association with sinners, in order to save them, through repentance. But the selfish Pharisees and scribes, inflated with a sense of their own importance, could not comprehend the Lord's idea of righteousness. And, to them, the fact that Jesus associated with sinners was proof that He was not the true Messiah. For they expected the Messiah to come to them, to raise them into still greater power and importance, and thus to separate them, even more fully, from all sinners. And so they inferred that this man, who made so much of common sinners, and did not exalt the Pharisees and scribes, could not be the true Messiah, and must be an impostor.

Thus, they were in total error, as to the whole character of Jesus Christ. And, in fact, even the Old Testament would have taught them these truths, if they had been in mental conditions to receive such truths. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The Spiritual Meaning. The Shepherd. The "man" who has the hundred sheep, represents the Lord, who is the Divine Shepherd, the owner of all the human race, and of all good and true qualities in all human beings. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is called the Shepherd. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." And, in the New Testament, we find Jesus claiming for Himself, the Divine title of Shepherd. "I am the good Shepherd. . . I and

the Father are one.” The Sheep.

And, in both the Old and New Testaments, men are called the Lord’s sheep. “For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” And, in the New Testament, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life.” Abstractly, sheep represent charity, or love to the neighbor. In a general sense, the sheep of our minds are all our good principles of affection.

One Hundred.

One hundred, as a round number, and a general number, represents all. One hundred sheep are all the regenerate affections of the human mind, all our good qualities. So, one hundred is often used as a standard, in numbering, or weighing, or in comparison. We say, there is not more than one man in a hundred, who does so and so.

Losing One Sheep. To lose one sheep out of one hundred, is, mentally, to lose one of our good qualities, or virtues. This is the case, when any good quality in us suffers a decline, loses its goodness, and loses its vitality and activity. We lose it from our mind and character. Its work, or use, is lost to us. For, we lose any good quality as we relapse into the evil which is opposite to it.

Innocence. The one sheep, the good quality which is lost from the erring mind, is, especially, the principle of innocence. Innocence is not merely a negative state, of freedom from corruption, as is the outward innocence of a little child, which is in the innocence of ignorance. Spiritual innocence is the innocence of wisdom. Inward innocence consists in looking to the Lord, and in living in the love and practice of the Lord’s principles, in the acknowledgment that man, of himself, is neither good nor true. Innocence is that quality of the will, in which it is open to the Lord, and receptive of life from Him. This innocence is the central principle in all good qualities. It is utterly opposed to all forms of self-love and of self-intelligence. This innocence was lost in the fall of man. For the fall was a relapse into lower forms and phases of mental life; it was, especially, a failure to look to the Lord, and a desire, in man, to lead himself, rather than to be led by the Lord. And, since the fall, the effort of the Lord has always been to restore to man his lost innocence; to lead him back to a child-like state of trust in the Lord, looking to the Lord, and not to self.

If a man, thinking of his good qualities, regards these as his own, and separates them from connection with the Lord, these virtues lose their heavenly quality. For they draw all their life from the Lord, momentarily, and while they are acknowledged and received as His gifts to men. Virtues claimed as our own, lose their quality of innocence. The Wilderness. This innocence is, especially, the sheep that was lost; and without which, the ninety-nine sheep, all the other virtues, were left in the wilderness, the condition in which there was little life. Without innocence, without the loving acknowledgment of the Lord, every other virtue is left in a mental and spiritual wilderness, without the nearer presence of the Divine Shepherd; and hence subject to many dangers. Without innocence, every supposed virtue is tainted with self-merit. But the Lord seeks to restore to man’s mental fold, this lost sheep of innocence; to lead man back to the acknowledgment of his Lord, and thus to openness to heavenly life.

Seeking The Lost. The Lord, as a Shepherd, is ever watching His sheep, noting the mental states of every wandering soul, and every wandering feeling and thought in every soul. And He goes forth, in His holy Word, and in the ministrations of His holy angels, to seek and save that which

was lost.

And, in illustrating this principle of Divine help, the sheep is the best beast to make the story plain; for, when lost, separated from the flock, the Oriental sheep, used to the shepherd's daily care, does not wander home, like the dog, or horse, but often becomes alarmed, and flies from impending dangers, exhausting his strength, until he falls down and dies.

Without the principle of innocence, the most gifted mind is left in a spiritual wilderness, with his affections and thoughts obscured and bewildered, feeling an inward loss which nothing can restore, except a return to an acknowledgment of the Lord, and a life in the Lord. Repentance and amendment of life bring the mind back into conjunction with the Lord. When the Lord, as the Divine Shepherd, sees that we have lost one of our mental sheep, especially the principle of inward innocence, (the love and mental habit of looking to the Lord) He goes forth into our minds, seeking to save that which was lost. He sends some clear and vigorous truth to our rational attention to recall to our minds the great fact that, without Him, "we can do nothing." In every way, and through every rocky path, and every dense thicket, He seeks our lost sheep, which is, in fact, His sheep. And, if we are willing and obedient, He can restore our spiritual sheep, our state of innocence. And, through all our life, our Lord seeks to save our lost sheep. He never ceases the search, "until He find it," if we are willing. And we all need this Divine assistance, for "All we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way." The Shoulders.

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it upon his shoulders, rejoicing." The shoulders, by which we exert our power, or sustain and support what we carry, represent our power, our energy. So, when we would urge a man to exert his powers, we say, "Put your shoulder to the wheel, and make it move." Thus, as relating to the Lord, to lay the sheep on the shoulders, indicates that the Lord exerts all His Divine power to restore fallen men to connection with Him, as the source of their life.

And, as it relates to our side of the work, it calls us to put forth our whole energy to restore our lost innocence, by breaking away from self-dependence, and looking to the Lord, as the source of all life; and thus re-establishing our orderly connection with the inflowing life of heaven, in which the lost sheep of innocence will be restored to our mental flock. And when we feel, again, the return of our lost innocence, in our full acknowledgment of our Lord, we are, with our whole power, to urge every quality of our mind and life to come into full connection with the heavenly quality of spiritual innocence; to acknowledge their dependence upon the Lord. We are to carry out this restored principle, with all the-energy of our will. We are to put it upon our mental shoulders, and carry it to our mental home, rejoicing in having found that which was lost. The present parable especially exhibits the Lord's agency in saving men. The other side of the work, the man's part, is more especially brought out in the third parable in the chapter, that of "The Prodigal Son," who arises, and goes to his father.

Rejoicing.

Everyone rejoices, in finding what he had lost; and he rejoices in proportion to the greatness of his former loss, and of his sorrow in his loss. Anyone, who has made any progress in regenerate life, and has felt the joy of uniting with the Lord, in heavenly affections and uses, and who has, at any time, become conscious that he has been relapsing into worldliness, and losing the high quality of spiritual life, feels a sense of terrible loss. In his sorrow, he feels alarmed at his condition. He cries

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. . . . Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit.”

And, as he returns to an orderly life, looking to the Lord, he feels the inflowing love of the Lord; and he rejoices in his restoration to spiritual life. The joy of heaven is communicated to his open mind, as he is led back into the state of the innocence of wisdom. O Lord, “Let Thy judgments help me; I have gone astray, like a lost sheep: seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments.” And then the Lord makes the truth clearer to the repenting mind, as He says, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy maybe full.” The Jews, as a nation, were broken up by the want of inward innocence; and they have been, ever since, wanderers upon the face of the earth, without a nationality or a home.

Friends And Neighbors.

“And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” The friends and neighbors of our spiritual qualities are our good natural qualities, which are also called in to rejoice with us; to feel, and respond to, the joy that is communicated to our spiritual minds, from the heavens, and from our spiritual minds to our natural minds.

Rejoicing Over Repentant Sinners.

“I say unto you that, likewise, joy shall be in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.” This last verse has been a stumbling-block to the interpreters. It seems to offer a premium for sinning and repenting, rather than for an entire life of freedom from sin. But, the trouble has been in a misunderstanding of the force and meaning of the verse. The text does not say that the Lord loves the repentant sinner more than He loves the righteous man, nor that He does any more for the sinner: it merely says there is more rejoicing over the sinner. And it does not say that such rejoicing is done by the Lord, but by men.

Illustration. And it is clear why there is a sense in which this is so. If you have a family of children, all of whom are healthy and vigorous, except one feeble one, your care is demanded for this feeble child, more than for the others; and his afflictions draw out your sympathy and your affections, more than the others, who do not seem to need so much sympathy. And, if some remedy should quickly restore the health of your feeble child, there is a sense in which you would rejoice more over his restored health than over that of the other children, whose health had not been in danger, and for whom you had never been anxious.

Spiritual Loss.

And, spiritually speaking, our loss of innocence gives us great solicitude. And when this lost sheep is found, and restored to the fold, we rejoice over it more than over the other virtues; because, in fact, this principle of spiritual innocence gives tone and character to all the other good qualities. Without it, they are left in the wilderness. And, in one sense, the wilderness is a state of temptation, in which our good principles are not in full vigor of life. Thus, rejoicing in the restoration of our innocence is, practically, a rejoicing in the restoration of the inward quality of all our virtues.

Need No Repentance.

Thus the whole mind of man rejoices in the return of the lost sheep of innocence, more than in the virtues which appeared to “need no repentance.” These “need no repentance,” now, because they have already gone through their repentance, in times past. For all need repentance, at some time. And the merely external righteousness of the Pharisee does not take a man to heaven, at all; and so there would not be any rejoicing in heaven, over such repentance. For the rejoicing mentioned in the last verse of the parable is said to be “in heaven,” i.e., among men of heavenly character. We cannot ascribe varieties of feeling to our Lord; He, being infinite, is above all circumstances and accidents. And heaven is not merely a place, full of men; it is a condition. And it is in men. “The kingdom of God is within you.” The joy of heaven is, then, interior joy, the joy of our spiritual and regenerate affections, which rejoice in the restoration of a state of innocence, more than in all other qualities, when these are separated from spiritual innocence, which is the inward foundation of all heavenly qualities.

Permissions. In the practical providence of the Lord, some men reach higher states of regenerate life by being permitted to fall into sin, and by seeing their own evils, and acquiring an abhorrence of them, than the same men could attain in an even life, without appearance of sin: because, in the even life, there would be danger of self-righteousness, and also of ignorance of their real tendencies. Some minds require actual personal experience, to give them an abhorrence of sin. ‘And such men, when they repent and reform, may be regenerated to a high degree. The Lord permits each man to meet just such things as are necessary to his regeneration. The chief question is not what we come from, or come through, but what we finally come into. But all need repentance, reformation and regeneration. And it is best always to shun every evil, during all our life; and to do every good that we can, in the name of the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him; and yet doing our part, by keeping His commandments. The Good Shepherd. The early Christian Church, which was in a more childlike state than the First Christian Church of later times, loved to dwell, with great delight, upon the image of the Lord, as the good Shepherd, bringing home the lost sheep. You find this image on many of the early Christian relics, gems, seals, pieces of glass, etc., and on bas-reliefs on the sarcophagi, or stone coffins, and in paintings in the catacombs, or subterranean burial-vaults of the early Christians. And it is well for men of to-day, to keep in mind the boundless and tender love of the Lord. For, as we rise to an appreciation of the quality of the Divine Love, we become more fully able to prepare our hearts to receive, and to live in, such a quality of love. Our Lord is always operating, to draw us out of evil, and into goodness. Our sins are not laid up against us, in a grand debtor and creditor account, in heaven. But sin is like ill-health; we must live ourselves out of it, according to the laws of life. And he who lives himself out of past sins, and hates his own evils, thereby frees himself from their present influence; and the Lords leads him above them. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He restoreth my soul.”

36. The Lost Piece of Silver.

The Lost Piece of Silver.

(Luke 15:8-10.) The Loss And Recovery Of Truth.

Summary. A neglected truth is practically lost to us, until we return to an affectionate practice of it. And, with our renewed recognition and practice of a truth, there comes renewed union with the good which the truth teaches, and which is the inward life of the truth. And, as we renew our mental connection with the truth and the good, we renew our connection with our Lord, who is the Source of all good, all truth, and all life. And, in this renewed connection, we are lifted up, mentally, into a state of spiritual rejoicing. The Literal Story. The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, seeing the Lord associating with publicans and sinners, sought to destroy His influence among the people, by accusing Him of being a sinner, also. In their evil character, they could scarcely imagine that Jesus could have any heavenly motive for associating with social outcasts.

Misjudging.

Evil men, judging from their own mental conditions, rarely understand the motives of good men. Those who know their own selfish desires and plans, seldom see that others are actuated by totally different motives. And so men of low moral character are always ready to doubt the existence of purer motives in other men. The Reply. And the only effective answer to the suspicions and slanders of evil men, is the reply which the Lord, Himself, made to these Pharisees and scribes; i.e., He showed them that it is good to seek and to save that which is lost; and that His Divine Love was doing a that could be done, to save every sinner. The Lord's association with sinners, was not to make Himself Eke them, but to induce them to become like Him. And so, it is the duty, and it should be the joy, of every good man, to do all the good that he can do to those who need his help.

Connections. The two parables, "The Lost Sheep" and "The Lost Piece of Silver," are closely connected, showing the two sides of one phase of our human life. The parable of "The Lost Sheep" relates especially to the condition of the will, or heart, in the repentant man; and the parable of "The Lost Piece of Silver" relates particularly to the understanding, or intellect, in the same man. Thus, the first parable refers to the good that is in the man's heart and its affections, and the second parable refers to the truth that is in the man's intellect and its thoughts. The Woman. Silver. The woman represents the affectional element. Silver represents truth, as distinguished from gold, which represents good. In the Scriptures, the Church, as to its affection for truth, is often represented as a woman, a virgin, or a wife. Silver represents the things of the spiritual degree of life, the degree characterized by truth, as distinguished from the celestial degree, which is characterized by good. "I am the Lord, thy Savior and thy Redeemer. . . . For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver; i.e., in the regeneration, the Lord gives us internal, celestial good, instead of natural good, and spiritual truth instead of hard natural truth.

Silver Pieces.Ten. The “pieces of silver,” in the parable, were Greek coins, drachmae, each drachma being worth about fifteen cents. They were small coins, in daily use for common necessities of life. There were ten pieces. Ten, as a representative number, denotes all. The ten pieces of silver represent all the truths necessary for practical life, truths of life from the Lord’s Word. To have these ten pieces of silver in possession of the woman, is to have our affection holding possession of abundance of truths from the Divine Word.

Losing One Piece.

And, when the woman lost one piece of silver, she represented our affection losing its hold upon one important truth of life, by neglecting to practice that truth. For instance: suppose we have set our affection upon the truths of the New-Church, which we know in abundance; i.e., with sufficient fullness for all practical purposes. But, suppose we allow ourselves to fall into some evil feelings, or false thoughts, or bad habits, by whose influence our mind becomes neglectful of the truth; and some important truth becomes obscured to our mental vision.

Illustration.

Suppose, for instance, that we lose sight of the grand truth that all our knowledge of spiritual truth is from the Lord, by revelation, and not from any ability in ourselves, to discover truth, apart from the Lord’s revelation. In this case, we should lose one piece of silver. And, if we were making an effort to be regenerated, such a loss, would soon be discovered and felt; and it would occasion great spiritual distress. We would soon realize that, in some way, and in some wrong state of feeling or thought, we had lost the actual use of the great truth of the dependence of all things upon the Lord. We might theoretically believe this doctrine, and yet we might fail to see its practical operation upon our own states of life.

Now, suppose we begin to realize that we have suffered some such loss, mentally; that the truth of the Divine Providence, for instance, is not as clear to us, in practical matters, as it used to be, and as it should be, what should we do? Like the woman in the parable, we should light a candle, (or lamp) and search for the missing truth. And, in that search, we should sweep our mental house, and work, diligently, until we should find that truth returning to us, in its clearness and force. The House.

Oriental houses were, intentionally, so constructed as to exclude the glaring light and heat, in a hot climate. They were low, stone buildings, generally having very few windows, and, often having no opening but the door-way. The floor was generally of dry earth. In such a dark house, it would be difficult to see any small object, especially on such a floor; and so it would be necessary to call in the aid of artificial light. The Lamp. The “candle,” in the parable, is, literally, a lamp; and it is so rendered in the New Version of the New Testament. Now, a lamp represents a doctrine, which, as a hollow vessel, receives the warm oil of love, from which comes the light of intelligence in truth. Mental light is truth. And truth is from the Word of the Lord. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” And the man who does not look to the Lord, but relapses into evil, loses his mental light, or truth.

Searching. The woman, lighting a candle, or lamp, to search for the lost piece of silver, is a symbolic figure, representing our affection for truth, going to the Lord’s Word, carrying the doctrine of the Church, that the Lord’s Word may light up the doctrine, to aid our affection in returning to a

realization of some important truth, which has become obscured to us, by our neglect to practice it.

Take, for instance, the truth of the Lord's constant providence, in all details of our daily life. Sometimes, we lose sight of this great truth, and it becomes obscured to us. We suffer the practical loss of it, until, taking the doctrine of the Church as a lamp, we go to the Lord's Word, that our lamp may be lighted up, so that we can confidently carry this doctrine with us, and search for the missing truth, until we recover it. We procure light from the Word of the Lord, especially from the commandments of the Decalogue. We look to our Lord, for help; and we expect to receive help through the doctrine of the Church, enlightened and confirmed from the Divine Word.

Sweeping The House.

But, in order to find the lost coin, the woman not only takes a lamp, and lights it, but also sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she finds the lost silver. The house, in which a man lives, represents his will, in which he dwells, inwardly. As the ruling-love of his will is, so is the character of the man. To sweep the house, is to cleanse it, and put it in order; to sweep up what is out of place in the house, and to throw out the rubbish. And so, mentally, to sweep our house, with the aid of the light of our lamp, is to examine the condition of our will, or heart, and to gather up what is out of place; and to cast out all things that ought not to be in our minds.

Self-Examination.

Mental sweeping involves self-examination, to discover what is wrong with us. When we sweep the house, we see all there is in the house, good and bad; and we separate the good from the bad, casting out the latter. And when we sweep out our hearts, we search through them, to see what dust of the sensuous life has settled there, to hide the silver truth that we would love to see again, in its clearness. In sweeping, we look for the dust and dirt, for the sake of getting rid of them; so, in mental sweeping, we examine ourselves, for the sake of seeing, and getting rid of, the sensuous dust of life, the mere worldly trifles that often settle thickly upon our natural affections. In sweeping out our minds, we prepare them for the reception of high and heavenly principles; we set them in order, by removing the evils which appear in the light of our lamp. We examine ourselves, and pay particular attention to each of our affections, and to all our different states of feeling.

Discovering The Cause. In this self-examination, and in the consequent cleansing and setting in order of our minds, we find out what is the matter with us, and why the lost truth lost its firm hold upon our feelings and thoughts; why we did not clearly see the truthfulness of the truth; why we were not practically satisfied to trust that truth, in our every-day feelings, thoughts and conduct. And, seeing this, we cast out the evil that obscured our mental piece of silver.

Rejoicing.

Everyone knows the great satisfaction felt by a careful housekeeper, in having her house in a clean and orderly condition. And every one who loves the truth knows what satisfaction comes to the mind, when his mental house is clean, and in good order, with every good and true principle in its appropriate place, and all the external, sensuous dust and dirt of life cast out. In this condition of mind, the truth is clear, and we have practical confidence in it. The Test.

And, in fact, if, at any time, we find ourselves losing confidence in any truth, as taught in the doctrines of the New Church, we may rest assured that there is something the matter with our

mental house-keeping; that we have lost a piece of our mental silver; and that our inward house needs to be swept and cleansed, with the aid of the mental lamp of doctrine, lighted from the Word of the Lord. This is the practical way to make the truth clear and satisfactory to our minds; i.e., to cleanse our hearts of their evils, and to sweep away the dust of sensuous trifles, which are too apt to settle down upon our hearts. "Create, in me, a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Diligence.Persistence. Our mental seeking is the action of our understanding. But the parable declares that the woman will seek "diligently," and seek "till she finds" the lost piece of silver. Diligence is communicated to our intellectual search, according to the real interest felt in the matter, by our will. If we are in real earnest, from the heart, we do not seek in a halfhearted way; nor do we soon become discouraged; but we seek diligently; and we seek till we find. So we are told, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." We ask with our heart; we seek with our understanding; and we knock when we put forth an effort, when we carry out our feeling and thought, in the practical activity of conduct. What we love, we are in earnest about. We intend to succeed. The truth comes back to us, and we find it, when we feel the loss of it, and when we intend to return to a clear perception of it. Truth remains with him who keeps himself in condition to retain it, by the daily use of it. Truth, in the mind and life, is like muscle in the body, the regular, day use of it develops and increases it.

Truth Perceived. The perception of a truth, as a practical principle, is not given arbitrarily, as a reward for piety; it is the result of a state of mental preparation. Spiritual life comes to him who earnestly seeks it; who makes it the principal object of his activity. And when he attains spirituality of mind, all the outward things of life take their proper places, as servants, and not masters. "Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Truth Obscured.

Every truth that we cease to practice becomes obscure to us. And, if we see that a truth has lost its hold upon us, we may know that we have not earnestly practiced that truth, in our daily life. We have not had full confidence in it. We have allowed some dust of the earth to hide its clearness, and to reduce its force, in our lives. For instance: once, we felt sure of the Divine Providence; and now we are not sure of it. And why? Simply because we have not trusted the Divine Providence, but have tried to have our own way. We need to light our lamp, and sweep our house, and seek diligently, till we recover our lost truth. We need to shake off the dust of the senses, and to elevate our mind more fully into the higher atmosphere of spiritual things. In fact, there is such a continued drawing towards the dust, (situated as we are, amid sensuous things) that we need to keep ourselves in the habit of elevating our minds, whenever we fix our affections, our thoughts, and our conduct; thus thinking of things from their inward side, and judging righteous judgment, and not judging by sensuous appearances. We need to make spiritual principles familiar to our every-day thought, and to keep them so. But the spirituality of truth is lost to us, whenever we fall into any corruption of our affection, our thought, or our conduct.

Good And Truth. In the last parable, the shepherd is a man; but the owner of the silver is a woman; and it is so, because, interiorly, the characteristic love of the man is the love of good, and that of the woman is the love of truth. There are various representative meanings of the terms, man, husband, etc., and woman, wife, virgin, widow, etc., according to the subject treated of, and the

discrete degree of life illustrated. But, interiorly, the man is a form of love, and exteriorly he is a form of wisdom; while the woman is, interiorly, a form of wisdom, and exteriorly a form of love. And as, in this world, we live in our exteriors, men are here characterized by the intellectual life of wisdom, or truth, and women by the affectional life of love, or good. But we notice that a man is attracted to a woman, not on account of her intelligence, but on account of her goodness, her love. And a woman is drawn to a man on account of his intelligence, rather than because of his goodness. And, in this, we see the interiors of each drawn towards things that are like them, while the exteriors are drawn to the things that are different.

Friends And Neighbors. The friends and neighbors of our spiritual qualities, are our good natural qualities, which are also called in to rejoice with us; to feel, and respond to, the joy that is communicated to our spiritual minds, from the heavens, and from our spiritual minds to our natural minds. And even the angels rejoice with us, in the restoration of any good or true principle to our minds and lives, after it has been lost, and found again. Every repentant emotion of our hearts, finds a response in the angels in the heavens.

Angels Rejoicing. And if our emotion originates in the determination of our will, to gain, again, the lost good, or the lost truth, (the sheep or the piece of silver) not only shall our own minds be made happy in renewed life, spiritually and naturally, but also, in renewing our orderly connection with the heavens, we shall cause the angels to renew their rejoicings over the goodness of the Lord, and "His wonderful works to the children of men."

Thus, every good affection, sincerely cherished, and intelligently understood, and diligently practiced, will go down the ages, as a blessing to all, a "thing of beauty [that] is a joy forever." And, on the other hand, the loss of every good principle, and every truth, lost from our practical daily life, diminishes the joy of the created universe. In the light of these facts we cannot afford to lose any heavenly principle from our minds and lives, by neglecting to practice it, and by sinking ourselves below the high level of its operation, and nearer to the deadly emanations of the hells.

37. The Prodigal Son.

The Prodigal Son.

(Luke 15:11-32.) The Sinner's Return To The Lord.

Summary. The abuse of knowledge, to favor selfish purposes, plunges the man into distress. But, when he recognizes the cause of his distress, and, in acknowledgment of the Lord, returns to the love and practice of the truth, all the Divine influences are exerted to restore him to an orderly condition. He who breaks away from the restraints of truth and order, finds, after all, that he has but exchanged a kind master for a cruel one; that, in departing from the guidance of the Lord, he has become a wretched slave to his own lusts, and to the hells. And he learns, also, that the laws of heavenly life, the very influences which he sought to escape, he must finally depend upon, to rescue him from his self-inflicted misery. On the other hand, a natural-minded man, though externally in order, cannot appreciate the quality of the Divine Love, nor the experiences of the spiritual-minded man. And yet the repentant sinner, when spiritual-minded, rises to a higher or more interior quality of spiritual life than the moral, but natural-minded, man can attain. The Connection. In the text and context there are three parables. All these parables exhibit the Lord's love to men, and His constant effort to save men from evil and sin. The parable of "The Lost Sheep" treats of the loss of some good affection, and the distress felt until that affection is found, again, and returned to our mental flock. The parable of "The Lost Piece of Silver" treats of the loss, of some important truth, by our neglect to practice it. And the present parable displays, especially, the repentant sinner's effort to return to the Lord, as well as the Lord's prompt co-operation. And, as the sinner's desire to return to the Lord is prompted by the Lord, Himself, so, in all three of the parables we have but different phases of the Divine activity in blessing men. The Man. The Two Sons. The "certain man" is the Divine Man, the Lord, Himself. And the "two sons" are two classes of men, in the Church. The Church is formed by means of truths. But there are two classes of men who are in the knowledge of truth; first, those who are in the external knowledge of truth, and who are external members of the Church, natural minded, yet in the effort to govern their conduct by the doctrines of the Church; and secondly, those who are in the interior understanding of truth, and who are interior members of the Church, or who are becoming such. The first class, or external members, are apt to live a good moral life, and yet without the higher, or more interior, phases of a spiritual life. In the second class, some are impulsive, and are liable to wander away into sins of life, from which they can return only by repentance and reformation. Some men are markedly intellectual, rather than affectional; in others, the will predominates, and they are more affectional than intellectual. Others are finely balanced, the will and the understanding being of equal prominence. These are the most perfect characters. The good, moral men, who are yet external men, are the elder brother of the parable; and the sinning and repenting men, finally reaching a higher condition, are the younger brother; not that a certain amount of sinning is necessary to the attainment of a higher spiritual state; far from it. A man can, if he will, resist his tendencies to sin, without allowing them to break out into actual sins of life. And the less he sins, the better it is for him. The Occasion. But the parable was spoken in answer to the Pharisees, to show that a man

may live a correct life, outwardly, and yet, inwardly, harbor uncharitable and evil feelings; while another man may plunge into evils, and yet finally repent and reform, and be regenerated. This latter condition is more apt to be the case with the emotional man. The younger son felt the restraint of his father's house, and longed for what he supposed would be greater freedom. And, desiring the means of gratifying his love of pleasure, he asked from his father a division of the property. The Living.

Spiritually, a man's living, or means of living, is his supply of knowledge, knowledge of good and truth, which teach him how to live. These are mental riches. And, without these a man is poor, indeed. These riches are all the doctrines and teachings of the Lord's Word, and of the Church, by the practical application of which the man spiritually lives. The Younger Son's Request. When the son was not willing to live in his father's house, but wished to take his share of the property, and go away with it, he represented the mental condition in which a man desires to claim the knowledge of good and truth as his own, and to separate them from any connection with the Lord, or any acknowledgment of his dependence upon the Lord, for them. This is the man who thinks himself sufficiently intelligent to discover truth and good, without any help from the Lord, and who feels that it is beneath his dignity to have to go to the Lord for truth to be revealed to him. So he separates his knowledge from any connection with the Lord, and regards them as his own. This state is in dire opposition to the state indicated by the man who sincerely prays, "Give us, this day, our daily bread," and who thus acknowledges his daily dependence upon the Lord's providence.

Dividing The Living. The father divided his living, giving the younger son his share; i.e., the man, seeking to separate himself from the Lord's laws of life, and seeking his own way, feels that he has become his own master. For when a man will not receive a truth as the Lord's truth, he must be permitted to regard it as his own. Thus he can be led to have some acknowledgment of the truth, as a doctrine. And, finally, by discipline, he may be led to see his folly, and to repent, and to acknowledge the Lord. When a man thinks he can lead himself, he must be allowed to try, until, by failure, he is convinced of his error. And then he may be willing to be led and taught by the Lord. Only thus can he be taught that the freedom to do evil is infernal freedom, which is slavery to sin, while the only true freedom is the liberty to keep the Lord's commandments.

Leaving His Father.

"Not many days after, the younger son gathered all [his property] together, and took his journey into a far country:" i.e., when the man began to imagine all knowledge to be his own, it required not many days, not many changes of state, to carry him far away from his former condition of dependence upon the Lord's truth. He soon descended to a low and sensuous state of mind. The son was not driven away from home, but he was uneasy in his father's home. He was full of selfish desires. He did not think anything about any duty to his father, in return for what his father had done for him, through years of childhood. He was self-centered, and lusting for his own way, in seeing the world. The life of the world is the "far country," a state of mind which, when merely sensuous and disorderly, is far removed from the home of the human soul, in the Father's house of "many mansions."

Riotous Living.

Then the youth, bent upon sensuous pleasures, “wasted his substance in riotous living,” that is, in dissipation; putting his heavenly Father, and his spiritual home, far from his thoughts. Thus the pleasure-seeker attempts to drive away the thoughts that arise to warn him of his folly. He abused his mental riches, his knowledge, by immersing them in sensuous lusts and disorderly pleasures, until the substance of them was gone. The Famine. And no wonder that “when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.” When truth is separated from the Lord as its Source and Life, its vitality is lost, and it ceases to sustain the human soul. The sensuous dissipation does not give the pleasure that was expected from it. And the mind soon loses even such enjoyment. There is, indeed, “a mighty famine in that land,” in that state of mind and life. Man is made for spiritual life; and nothing less than spirituality of life can permanently sustain his spirit. In the sensuous life of the disorderly world, there is always a spiritual famine. “Man doth not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt Thou recover me, and make me to live.”

Seen in the light of spiritual truth, there is no more pitiable object than an intellectual man who has forgotten the Lord, and who is trying to be intelligent from himself; and who, in spite of his self-conceit, is utterly ignorant of the primary principles of genuine human life, The sinner begins, by making the world his servant, but he soon ends by becoming the slave of the world. And, finally, when he has spent all; when the world has drawn from him all his substance; it casts him out, as the pitiless ocean soon casts out, upon its desolate shore, the dead body of him whose life it first destroys.

Engaging To Feed Swine.

But, even when in want, the youth would not return to his father. “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.” Such a man misunderstands the heavenly Father, and will not return to Him. So he descends still further into external states, seeking some false principle, some “citizen” of a “far country,” who can give him support. And this is citizen “-sends “him into the fields to feed swine,” that meanest of occupations in Oriental lands, and especially to the Jew, to whom the hog was unclean. In fact, even among the Egyptians, swineherds were the only persons forbidden to enter the temple.

Swine represent the filthy lusts of the sensuous mind, the low, greedy, selfish passions of groveling men. And feeding swine, mentally, is cultivating such groveling passions. Spiritually, every man joins himself to a citizen of a far country, and goes to feeding swine, when he adopts a false principle, and descends into the low excesses of worldly life, far removed from the spiritual state which is the home of the human soul; and when he there indulges his groveling passions, feeding his mental swine, instead of his mental sheep. It is seen that swine must be filthy, from the fact that, when Jesus cast out some devils, they asked to be allowed to enter into the swine. And the citizen who sent the youth to this work, is the false principle to which he joined himself, in the pursuit of pleasure; the false view of life and its purposes. And, spiritually, sooner or later, every man who departs from the Lord, will come to feeding swine.

Husks.

But, even with the swine, the youth hungered, and he would have eaten the husks, along with the swine. These husks were the pods of the carob tree, resembling our locust beans. They were used as food for swine, and, in an emergency, for food for the poor. Husks, or shells, represent the externals, the mere outside of things, which cannot sustain the life of the human soul. "No man gave" these husks to the miserable Song of Solomon i.e., they could not supply food to any manly principle of his mind.

Now, the youth has made his experiment, and has come to sorrow. And now is the time for the Divine influence to reach him, and to arouse whatever "remains," or states of good and truth, are still stored up in his inward mind. In the Divine Mercy, the youth's better nature was aroused to repentance.

Came To Himself.

"And when he came to himself," etc. For, meanwhile, he had been beside himself, spiritually insane in his folly. A man is himself when he is rational; but he is insane when he throws away rational thought, and plunges into sensuous pleasures. And he comes to himself, when reason returns. He comes to himself, when he comes back to an acknowledgment of his heavenly Father. For, separated from the Lord, the man is as nothing. "Without Me, ye can do nothing." But when the man comes to himself, his humiliation and sorrow will be great, in proportion to the depth of his fall, and his capacity for better things. The Servants. And then he reflects that his father's servants have enough, while he, the erring son, is perishing with hunger. The hired servants are natural truths, which, in connection with the Lord, lead a man to a good life, and, hence, to happiness. In the Lord's service, there is spiritual food in plenty, for every man, each according to his capacity. "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." And well is it, for every man who, even amid the swine of the world's sensuous life, awakes to a recognition of the fact that he is spiritually perishing with hunger, and that, in his heavenly Father's house, there is spiritual food for all. The youth could have known this, before he left home, if he would. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

Hunger. But now he knows, to a certainty, that the human soul longs for food which the world cannot supply. He has found that he who is not willing to remain a son, led by the Divine Father, will finally become a slave to the devil; that he who was not satisfied with the bread of angels, sinks lower and lower, until he longs in vain, even for the food of swine. He who is determined to see the world, without the guidance of the Lord, is sure to see the evil and painful side of the world, and to plunge into that evil, until he finds himself perishing with spiritual hunger, even though there may be an abundance of husks about him. The son thought he knew all about what the world could give him, of real enjoyment; and so his father could but allow him to learn a lesson from bitter experience. "Experience keeps a hard school, but fools will learn in no other." But, if there be any spirituality within a man, he cannot long cover it up with the dust of the senses; he cannot satisfy its nobler longings with the husks that are food, for swine. In the midst of his groveling life, miscalled pleasures, his immortal soul will go unfed, perishing with spiritual hunger. Even though the man is trying to warm himself with the fires of hell, his inward manhood will be shivering in a coldness that nothing of the senses can warm. The Divine Leading.

And, even in his self-inflicted misery, the Lord's love still follows him, and arouses in him, if possible, some latent truth in his memory, or some childlike affection still remaining in his heart, and thus develops within him the beginning of a nobler hunger, which the lusts of the flesh cannot satisfy. Thus the Divine Love operates: it does not attempt to drive the swinish man away from the husks; but, whenever possible, it creates and arouses within the man, a higher aspiration and a nobler hunger; and, when these begin to operate, the man begins to loathe the swine and their food; and, in his own free-will, he gladly leaves the swine; saying, in humble repentance, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

Thus, the wretched man, like the sensuous Israelites, is finally led, by a long and devious path of wandering, to attain the blessed home which, at first, he might have secured with far less trouble.

How hard it is, to convince the natural-minded man, especially in his youthful days, that there are profounder things in human life than he has ever experienced; that the true life of manhood is in spirituality of character, and not in sensuousness; and that there is wisdom in the advice of those whose experience and observation have given them a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of human life; and that he who forsakes an orderly state of mind and life, to plunge into sensuous excesses, is spiritually insane, in his miserable folly.

Insanity.

And, indeed, how much of the mental insanity that fills our asylums, is the direct result of irregularity and excess in the indulgence of all the selfish passions. And how much of this sum of insanity could be avoided, especially in early life, by simplicity, integrity and cleanness of character, united with a calm spirit of contentment, and of trust in the Lord.

We cannot tell just what our interior mental states may be, but we can tell what our moral and natural conditions are. Over these we have control. And if we keep these in good order, governed by the Lord's commandments, loving, thinking and acting upon good principle, we shall thus build up a base to support all the elements of a good spiritual character, which our Lord can develop within us, as we prepare ourselves for it, by doing our part, keeping the commandments, and humbly performing our uses, happy in doing good.

Humility. This parable clearly teaches us that the spirit of humility and of innocence, which is so distasteful to the man in his selfish prosperity, and which he will do so much to escape, he must finally come to, and even in a more painful way, before he can gain any enduring good. The sins that we hate to confess, still cling to us, and take us away to a far country, and put us to feeding swine. But the sins that we sincerely and unreservedly confess, and cease to do, fall from us, as we journey away from them, towards our Father's home.

It is always so, in our regenerating experiences, that the very things which our infernal pride urges us not to do, even when we know we should do them, are the very things that, finally, we have to do, in even more humiliating circumstances than if we had done them before. It was so with the Israelites, in their representative journey; those who were unwilling to fight their way through to the promised land, died in the wilderness. So, in our regeneration, all our old generation of rebellious, selfish affections and false thoughts, must die in the wilderness of temptation, before we can enter the promised land, the regenerate state.

Spirituality of life begins in the sincere acknowledgment of our Lord, and in the desire to be led and taught by Him. Devils are unwilling to be led by the Lord; but the higher the angel, the more he loves to be led by the Lord. And hence, while the devils are all in slavery, the angels are all in freedom. "There is no peace . . . to the wicked." The human soul has but one home, and one Father; and, separated from them, it can have no real or enduring joy. And, as long as it dwells in this stage of life, the mercy of God will not let the soul rest in infernal evils, nor in worldly follies, without a constant reminder of its destiny and its capacities.

Arising, Etc.

"I will arise, and go to my father." Spiritually considered, the parable treats of a mental arising, an elevation of the mind and life to higher purposes and plans. When a man sees that he has been wasting his spiritual substance in disorderly living, he needs resolutely to determine to lift himself up, to arise, to a higher and better career. Every truth that he knows then calls to him, as Jesus did to His disciples, "Arise, let us go hence;" let us arise, out of all these low and debasing ways of feeling, thinking and acting, which can never satisfy an immortal soul. Then the sinner sees his only hope is in the Lord; and he says, I will go unto my Father; I will confess my sin, and acknowledge my unworthiness of the Divine mercies. I will look to the Divine Love to give me renewed life. As A Hired Servant. The penitent sinner is humble: he does not claim to be reinstated in his father's house as his son and heir. He says, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." The grown son is in freedom, but the servant is under command of the master. The sinner realizes that, in his tendency to sin, he is not in the freedom of one who loves the truth and lives in it; but that he is as a hired servant, a natural-minded man, in the knowledge of natural truth, and under the compulsion of obedience to a law which his lower nature opposes. He seeks a humble place, to serve under his Father's commands, recognizing the fact that he is not fit to control himself in spiritual freedom. His confession is full and unconditional: he makes no attempt to excuse himself, or to lay the censure upon others. And this is evidence of his sincerity. Insincere persons seek to shield their self-love by excuses. But the sincere penitent recognizes the evil and the sin to be his own; and, fairly and freely, he makes full confession of his guilt.

Sin Against The Lord. And he recognizes that, though we may wrong men, the sin is against the Lord, who, alone, is good. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." And, spiritually, as applied to the Lord, these words imply that the sin is against the Divine Love, and is seen by the Divine Wisdom, and forbidden by the Divine Law. So, in his grievous wrong-doing, David sang, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." He who is not willing to humble himself before the Lord, cannot attain any real goodness, because his self-love still controls him., and keeps him in evil. But humility casts down the self-love, and opens the mind to heaven. He goes to the Father. The Father Meeting The Son. And then, even when the man is "a great way off," far removed from a heavenly condition, but merely making an effort to reach that condition, the Father hastens to meet him, and receives him with affection. That the "father saw him," means, spiritually, that the man then recognizes the fact that the Lord is observing him. This is the action of the Divine Providence upon the man's understanding. And that the "father had compassion," is the action of the Lord's love upon the man's will, showing him that the Lord loves him. That the father "ran" to meet his son, denotes the Lord's action upon the man's life, or conduct, showing him how the Divine Father

meets him in every act of man's love, done according to the Lord's commandments. As the man returns to the Lord, it seems to him that the Lord is coming to him. But, in fact, the Lord is always with every man, and as near as the man's condition will enable the Lord to come. The father's "kiss" is a symbol of the union, or conjunction, of those who love each other. It is also a token of reconciliation. Thus, though the penitent acknowledge his evil, and considers himself as a servant, only, merely able to keep the truth externally, yet, in the new life that he receives from the Lord, he is enabled to keep the truth spiritually, also, in the freedom of love. The Servants. The Best Robe; Etc. The father "said to his servants," etc.; i.e., the Divine Love communicates its purposes and plans, by means of practical truths, precepts of life, from the Divine Word, which serve the Lord. Thus, the good comes to the penitent through the Divine Word, as a means of regenerating men.

"The best robe," or chief robe, is the knowledge of primary and essential truths, which are given to the penitent man, that he may be clothed with necessary principles of interior and exterior life. Thus, in returning to the Lord, the first thing is to renew our knowledge of what the Lord is, and how He helps us. The Ring. The Shoes. To put a "ring" on the penitent's hand, is to give him a pledge and confirmation of love and assistance. Rings were used to confirm and attest certain things. Seal rings -were used to attest the hand of the party, and to confirm an agreement. A king, sending a messenger, in haste, sent, with the messenger, the royal ring, to attest and confirm the authority of the message. So, in marriage, rings are used to witness, confirm and bind the agreement.

Shoes, for the feet, were signs of freedom, as slaves went with bare feet. Shoes represent the doctrines of practical life, for the government of the daily conduct, in outward things. Therefore, to receive the son in his home, again, and to clothe him, etc., denotes to receive him as a free and rational man; and to give him spiritual and natural truths, for the government of his conduct, inwardly and outwardly; and to attest and confirm, to him, all these truths, in the bonds of love. The Fatted Calf.

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry," etc. It was common for every well-to-do family to keep on hand a fattening calf, ready for any occasion of rejoicing. The word here used for killing means for a sacrifice. And sacrifice means to make holy. And a season of rejoicing at any joyous event, represents spiritual rejoicing, at any change of state, by which greater fullness of spiritual life is received.

Fat, from its oil, represents the warm, smooth love of good. And the calf, as a new generation from the cattle, or natural affections, represents a spiritual affection, which is a, new spiritual generation, developed by means of good natural affections. To prepare the fatted calf for a feast, denotes, then, to prepare our minds to come into new states of rejoicing in the better affections which the Lord communicates to us, when we go to Him fully and sincerely. These affections are, at first, natural good affections, in which there are the germs of spiritual and celestial affections; for all good natural affections are inwardly filled with things spiritual and celestial. Eating together, and being merry and glad, represent the joyous consociation of men who are in similar qualities of heavenly life., and who are conjoined to the Lord; or the consociation of such qualities in the mind.

Thus the penitent man, according to his sincerity, comes into participation in the delights of love to the Lord, and of love to the neighbor. And his eating with the household, at the feast, represents his appropriation of heavenly joys to his own heart, understanding and life. Thus, a return to the

Lord, as its Divine Father, brings the penitent soul into blessed union with the Lord, and with all who love the Lord.

Dead, And Restored. The prodigal's father asserted, as the occasion of rejoicing, "For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The sinner is dead to all that is good, true and joyous. He is dead to his spiritual home, and to his heavenly Father; dead to reason, and to angelic associations; dead, not only to his family, but also to the whole heavens; spiritually dead, in evils and sins; alienated from the Lord, who is the only Source of life. But, in repentance, reformation and regeneration, he returns to spiritual life. He was lost, wandering in sin, without the guidance of heavenly truth. But, in regeneration, he is found, because he returns to the Lord.

Making Merry.

"And they began to be merry;" i.e., what was in their affections and thoughts, was carried out in their joyous conduct, as good news induces men to gladsome merriment; and a fullness of inward joy moves men to corresponding joyousness of bodily motion.

Hope. The parable assures us that, even if we have sinned, we need not despair; for, though, of ourselves, we are utterly powerless to return to a heavenly condition, yet the infinite, boundless and tender love of our heavenly Father is always bending over us, seeking to save that which is lost, and giving immediate and adequate rescue and aid to every honest endeavor for a higher and better life.

Results. In the parable, the father is merciful and generous, But the son's own condition has much to do with the father's conduct. The son's humble repentance brought out the father's love. But, if the son had returned to his father's house, in an arrogant and insolent state of mind, he would have had a very different reception. Suppose he had pompously strutted into the house, and had said, Well, here I am again. I have spent all you gave me; and now I want more. I am tired and hungry. Hasten, and get me the best you have in the house, to eat and to drink; and give me the best clothes you have. Kill your fatted calf, and make a grand feast for me. And be quick about it.

Suppose he had thus returned, what would the indignant father have done? Probably he would have subjected the youth to some wholesome discipline. But the changed condition of the young man proved him worthy of the loving father's aid. And so, if the sinner should demand to be taken into heaven, in his evil condition, he would, by his own doings, close, in himself, the ability to receive the things of heavenly life. For heaven is not merely a place; it is a condition of mind and of life. The Prodigal. In the literal sense, the son's repentance seems to begin in hunger and want; but, we remember that these things are representative of spiritual hunger and thirst after righteousness. The prodigal son is not one who merely wastes his money and health in physical dissipation; but spiritually, the prodigal is one who is in the Church, having the knowledge of good and truth, as the means of acquiring spiritual life, but who falls into falsity and into evil life, and does not obey the known truth.

Illustration. This picture of the prodigal is no fancy sketch; it is a faithful portrait of men and women who know the truth, and yet indulge their selfish passions. Visit an asylum for the insane, and see some poor wretch, in rags, hollow-eyed, imagining himself a king, and his keepers but his slaves. How can he think thus? He is insane. But he is not one whit more insane than the young man who goes out from his earthly father's house, imagining he can find greater freedom and happiness in

the indulgence of his lower nature in the excesses of the world. And he is not more insane than the man who seeks to be free from the restraints of the Divine Law, in his heavenly Father's house, and who plunges into selfish life, looking for happiness.

Sooner or latter, he will find himself in spiritual slavery to his lusts, and in companionship with devils. And blessed shall be, if, ere it is too late, he shall awake to a recognition of his folly; and shall go to his Father, in humility, repentance and reformation; like the poor maniac among the tombs, sitting at the feet of Jesus, "clothed, and in his right mind."

Stages Of Progress. The prodigal son passed through six stages of progress, and into the seventh: first, a state of self-will; second, acts of folly; third, misery; fourth, reflection fifth, repentance; sixth, reformation; seventh, peace. These are his six days of the new creation, followed by the seventh state, as a Sabbath of spiritual rest in the Lord. The Lords Love. This parable has given occasion to scoffers, to declare that, when a man has seen all he can of the world, and has exhausted himself, or has become disappointed with the world, his last resource is to turn to be a saint.

Well, even if it be so, is it not evidence of the boundless mercy of the Lord, that He can make a saint of such a man? In fact, how else can the worldly man be turned from his worldliness, than by allowing him to discover, by experience, how utterly the world fails to satisfy the longings of a human soul. A reformed worldling is far better than his scoffing critics, who, beneath their even exteriors, hide a cold, pitiless selfishness, which never rises to the high level of Christian charity.

It is one of the stumbling-blocks to natural-minded men, who, like children, think of outward rewards and punishments, that the Lord's blessings do not always fall upon a man according to his past career. But it is necessary to remember that the effort of the Divine Love is not to punish men for past acts, but to save men from their own folly, and to lift them out of evils. The Lord is not a great detective-officer, but a great Physician. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved." He "came to seek, and to save, that which was lost."

All Sin Dangerous. But let no man imagine that a career of sin will help him to become regenerate. All sin is dangerous and destructive. And, even where repentance follows a bad career, the greater the departure from goodness, the harder and longer will be the work of returning to the Lord. "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land; and verily, thou shalt be fed." The Lord's Work. As Jesus walked in Judea, teaching the laws of spiritual and natural life, and illustrating these laws in His own heavenly conduct; healing the sick, the lame, the maimed, and the blind; casting out demons; and raising the dead; so, in all His ways, the Lord is, to-day, doing all these heavenly works, spiritually, in the soul of every man who will turn to Him for spiritual life, and follow Him in the regeneration. He is always doing all that can be done for every man. The Elder Brother.

But, after all this beautiful picture of the repentance and reform of the sinner, and of the boundless love and generosity of the Father, the parable does not stop: it has another side, a dark, cold shadow, cast by something that obstructs the flow of the clear, warm sunshine of the Father's love. The elder son is angry, and out of sympathy with the feast of love. The case of the elder son presents matter for careful thought. Why should he raise his voice as a harsh discord amid this

harmony of love? He seems like a double character. In his long and faithful services, and his continued obedience, he presents an estimable side. But, in his utter failure to rejoice in his lost brother's return, and in his anger and complaint, he displays a spirit of envy, and of selfish uncharitableness. Like the self-righteous Pharisee in the temple, he boasted of his own goodness, and despised a sinner, even though that sinner was his brother, returned to a better life. For he had no reason to suppose that the penitent had not reformed. Not even the overflowing love and joy of his father could warm up the cold heart of the elder son. The External Moral Man. This elder son stands as a representative of a natural minded man, correct in his outward life, seeking regeneration on the natural plane, and yet without spirituality of mind, or of life. He is an external member of the Church, in the external reception of the truths of the Church. He is one who stands upon "original good," a continued good life, in orderly externals; but, in his present state, incapable of comprehending the interior quality of spiritual affection. He is like a pious Jew, envious of the Lord's attention to the Gentiles. In The Field. When the repentant son arrived at the father's house, the elder brother "was in the field," i.e., he was in the external works of life, performing external uses, in a spirit of obedience to the law. And, in his appreciation of his own merits, he was envious of the father's kindness to his brother. The Contrast. The elder son had led a correct life, and he was proud of his record, and unsympathetic towards those who had fallen into sin. The younger son had done evil, yet he had repented, and reformed, and was very humble. And in the circumstances, the younger son was in a better spiritual state than the elder son. The Music And Dancing. The elder son heard the "music and the dancing," the spiritual affection and the natural expression of it. But he was not in condition to respond to the joy of the household. He called a servant, and asked the meaning of these things; i.e., the mind of the natural man, coming in contact with the sphere of spiritual affection, inquires of his outward thought, as to the nature and quality of such a sphere of love. And he sees that the Lord's love always does well to repenting sinners. Would Not Go In. But he has no sympathy with such a love, He is sullen, and will not go in; i.e., the mind of the envious natural man feels an opposition to the sphere of an interior spiritual love, and is not willing to enter into such a state. It was natural that the elder son should feel indignation against the past evils of the younger son. But he was at fault, in thinking more of his brother's past career, than of his present safety. Probably he feared that he would now have to divide his own share of the estate with his brother. The Father Entreatin

But, as he was angry, and in opposition, his father came out, and entreated him to go in, and welcome his brother; i.e., an influx of truth from the Lord comes to the mind of the natural man, inclining him, if possible, to unite with spiritual affections, as heavenly blessings. But the natural mind, not yet regenerated, feels an opposition to the sphere of heavenly love. The Complaint. And it grumbles, to see that, in spite of their former evils, spiritual men are raised to high states of love and joy, while the natural man, in spite of his faithful obedience, is never given even a kid, to be merry over, even a new state of faith, to rejoice in. But, the trouble is with the natural man himself; he will not rise to new and higher states of mind and life. The Father's Reply. And the father replied, "Son, thou art ever with me; and all that I have is thine." The external man of the Church, obeying the law, as the Divine law, is, in his measure, ever with the Lord; he does not go away into open sin. To the extent of his receptivity, all things of heaven are open to him, and are his, if he appreciates them, and uses them as principles in his own life. He can go on, and carry his regeneration further, if he will. The Lord is always ready to give him all the heavenly good and truth that he will love and use. He cannot fairly complain that others have attained greater degrees of

regenerate life than he has, because these things are as open, and as free, to him, as they are to anyone.

Original Good.

It is, indeed, blessed, if a man can remain in "original good," living, from his youth up, in a good orderly life, and attaining a high degree of regeneration. This is what all should try to attain. But, to do so, a man must see and know his evil inclinations, and must hate and shun all his tendencies to evil. And he must bring his life into spiritual order, as well as into natural order. His natural good must be inwardly filled with spiritual good. He must not only do no wrong, but also hate and shun the feeling and thought of any wrong. And, until he does these things, his external correctness will not open his mind to the appreciation and experience of spiritual affections.

Three Heavens. In fact, there are three different heavens, because there are three different general kinds, or qualities, of regenerate life, the natural, spiritual and celestial. And the characteristic quality of the life of each higher heaven is beyond the comprehension and experience of those who are in lower heavens. The Two Brothers. The natural-minded condition, even when orderly, and desiring regeneration, is but the first step in regeneration; and, hence, it is represented by the elder brother, the first born. And the spiritual - minded state is a second step in regeneration; and, hence, it is represented by the younger brother, a newer outbirth in development. And, when a newer spiritual condition comes, it comes as a result of enduring temptations. And, sometimes, we may fall, and waste our spiritual substance in riotous living in the things of worldly life, before we awake to a recognition of our real condition, and come to ourselves, and arise, and go to our Father.

And, if it be so, even our external mind should rejoice, and be glad, in the return of rationality and goodness. In each of us, there are these two sons; the elder, or the hard natural state, exacting, unappreciative, and critical, and the more affectional younger son, of spiritual-mindedness, often struggling out of evil tendencies, and finally attaining a higher condition of regeneration than the natural thought can appreciate, until the latter becomes reconciled and united with its younger brother. When evils and falses are indulged in our affection and thought, the younger son is, for the time, lost and as dead; but when repentance and reformation lift us up into higher states, the lost one is found, and the dead is alive, again.

Without Fear. And here we have a suggestion that men need not live in fear of the past, even though it was sinful. No evil that we now hate, and have lived ourselves out of, will be held against us. The Lord does not keep a debtor and creditor account with us; but, in pure mercy, He gives us all the heavenly life and joy that we are willing to receive, through regeneration.

Regeneration. The great principle is simply this: that there is one life, the Lord's life, and that men are sustained by that life; and that men are blessed and happy, when they are in right relations with the Lord, in love, faith and obedience. And they are in such condition, when, from sincere good principle, they keep the Lord's commandments. Whenever these right relations with the Lord are interrupted by selfishness and sin, the man cuts himself off from the source and means of happiness. And he can restore his connection with the Lord, and with happiness, by sincere repentance and reformation, which enable the Lord to regenerate him.

Uncharitableness. The elder son was kept in some external order, and yet, inwardly, he cherished hard, envious, and uncharitable feelings and thoughts. And, when an occasion arose, he displayed these evil traits of character. He believed in his own innocence, and yet he fiercely condemned his brother, for falling from a state of innocence. And yet, the elder brother had not been regenerated; he had simply maintained a moral external life, which would make regeneration easier, if he was sincere. He saw the truth, and judged from truth, alone, without the charity which should have filled his heart, and should have guided his feelings and thoughts, in applying the truth to his brother. To the elder son, in his external state, judging by hard, cold truth, the mercy of his father seemed like weakness. But, from the standpoint of the father's love, there was no weakness, but rather, the spiritual strength of love.

Self-Righteousness.

It is very-hard for an externally moral man to avoid feeling a sense of superiority to a sinner. But, in this feeling, he fails to make acknowledgment of the fact that all men are sinners, secretly, if not openly. A feeling of superiority tends towards self-righteousness, which is one of the most malignant and subtle forms of human evil. Those who look upon themselves as saints will find themselves greatly mistaken in the reception awaiting them in the spiritual world. In many cases, "the first shall be last, and the last, first."

Self-righteousness induced the Pharisees to suppose that, as Jesus associated with sinners, He must be like them, in character. They complained that He was trying to make sin and sinners respectable, instead of condemning them as outcasts. And yet those very sinners, including even the "publicans and harlots," were more influenced by the preaching of Jesus, than the Pharisees were. Many sinners saw their condition, and repented, while the Pharisees closed their hearts against the Lord, as well as against the good that He gave men, and the truth that He taught.

Phariseeism. And to some extent we find the elder son, in the parable, acting as the Pharisees acted. He condemned, in anger, and had no appreciation of the love that would save the lost. He thought his own rewards were not equal to his merits, while his brother's sins were greatly rewarded. And, in this, he exhibited his own lack of spirituality of character. The elder brother could not do justice to the younger, as long as he did not feel right towards him. The younger son was not in a higher condition than he could have attained if he had resisted his evil inclinations; but he was in a far higher condition than if he had never seen and acknowledged his evils. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Historical Application. In the parables of "The Lost Sheep," and "The Lost Piece of Silver," the Pharisees were shown how they should act; and, in the parable of "The Prodigal Son," they were shown how they did act. In this parable, there is a suggestion of the story of Cain and Abel, or faith and charity, in the decline of the Church. Cain, the elder son, was jealous of the acceptance of the offerings of his younger brother, Abel; and his envy led to sin, in the murder of Abel. And we see the same spirit of sullen anger in the elder brother of the prodigal. Faith and charity are separated, in an unrighteous man; but they are brought together, again, in the process of regeneration. For the understanding and the will of man are thus separated, in his first condition. He knows truths, which he does not love or practice. The understanding is more manageable, but the will is impulsive and unruly. But, when regenerated, the will attains the higher and more interior conditions, and then the will and the understanding come together in harmony. The Reconciliation.

The parable does not say the father finally reconciled the elder son to the younger; but it would need to be so, to represent the full regeneration of the will and the understanding, or of charity and faith, or of the external and the internal mind. In the story of Cain and Abel we see the destruction of charity by "faith alone" in the declining Church; and, in the present parable, we see the restoration of charity, in the New-Church. And, in the opposition of the elder brother, we see the opposition of all forms of external religions, and of the doctrine of "faith alone," towards the restoration of the higher manhood, in the New-Jerusalem. But the Father will yet prevail upon the elder brother of faith to become reconciled to the younger brother of charity, or love, in his state of sincere repentance, reformation, and regeneration. And when the men of the New-Church rise to a high and holy life of Christian love, the Lord will be able to unite human faith and human love in the spiritual marriage of regeneration. Then will the New-Jerusalem have come down fully, from God, out of heaven, to dwell with men on earth. "And the Lord shall be King overall the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one."

38. The Unjust Steward.

The Unjust Steward.

(Luke 16:1-12.) Executive Wisdom. The Principle.

Good men, working for their spiritual future, should exhibit as much wisdom in administration, as is shown by worldly men, working for their worldly future. The Literal Sense.

Viewed superficially, this parable has been thought to encourage fraud. But no such idea can be drawn from a careful and logical consideration of the text. A parable is not intended to be true by mere comparison, but by correspondence, which is a comparison of spiritual and natural counterparts. In the literal sense, the parable presents the case of a shrewd man, who made a prompt and worldly-wise use of his opportunities. He found himself in a critical position, and he exhibited forethought, readiness and determination, in providing for himself, so that, when discharged from his position, he would have security for the future. And the literal moral of the parable is clear enough, i.e., that spiritual men ought to show equal executive ability, in escaping from impending spiritual dangers, and in providing for themselves, future spiritual protection and abiding-place. The Spiritual Sense.

And, in the spiritual sense, there is an exact meaning, by correspondence, as we shall see, as we proceed in the explanation. The Lord, in speaking to the natural-minded man, thus leaves a natural inference that he must make a good use of his natural riches, for the future life; and, to the spiritual man, He gives an intelligent direction for the rational conduct of spiritual life. The parable represents a state of temptation. To the natural man, provision for the future means the accumulation of worldly things; but, to the spiritual man, it means growth in character; for a man spiritually provides for the future, by outgrowing his evils, and growing into goodness. When the spiritual man finds himself in spiritual trouble, by neglect of the interests of his spiritual Master, he provides for the future, by making friends of those natural and spiritual principles which will always feed him, and provide for him a future home. The Man, And The Steward. In the parable, "the rich man" is the Lord, the Divine Man; not merely because all things in the universe are His, but also, and primarily, because all goodness and truth are His. He is Goodness, itself, Truth, itself, and Life, itself. In a general sense, the steward is the Church, dispensing the Lord's spiritual wealth, And in a limited sense, each individual man, as a Church in the least form, is a steward of the Lord, having charge of the Lord's good and truth.

Wasting The Goods. The steward was reported to the Lord as wasting his goods. These spiritual goods are the riches of spiritual life, the knowledge of good and truth, the principles of spiritual life, committed to men, for wise use. These spiritual goods are wasted by the man who neglects them, and who lives carelessly, making pious professions, without practicing the truth. And the Church, collectively, wastes the Lord's goods, when it teaches false doctrine, encouraging a careless life. And, through the whole history of the Church, the Lord has called it to account, for the abuse of its stewardship; collectively, through the holy Word, and individually, through the conscience of the

man.

Called To Account.

Naturally, when a man sees his great responsibility to the Lord, his conscience is moved. He sees that, in states of temptation, he is inclined to pervert his knowledge of good and truth, and to use them for selfish and worldly purposes. Then he is led to self-examination, to see what use he has made of his Master's goods. And the evil spirits who are tempting him, urge him to think that he has sinned beyond possibility of redemption, and that he must lose his spiritual home. But the Lord acts upon the man, through what there is of good and truth remaining in him, and leads him to arouse himself to a sense of his need of reformation.

And, in the judgment, the Lord's truth calls every man, and every Church, to render an account of its stewardship. And every Church that fails to teach vital truths, finally hears the condemnation, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." So there have been several general Churches, or dispensations, varying in character. But, in the promised New-Jerusalem, there will be the final and enduring Church, teaching the Lord's truth from His open Word, in its literal and spiritual meanings. The Inward Thought. When the man sees how he has wasted the Lord's spiritual riches of truth, he says, "within himself," "What shall I do?" This is his inward thought, moved by his conscience. What shall I do, to free myself from my natural tendencies to evil? I fear that my neglect of spiritual riches will lead to my loss of them.

Digging.

"I cannot dig;" literally, "I have not strength to dig." Men who are not used to manual labor, do not feel able to do it, habitually. But, spiritually, to dig is to search into things, to learn their profound principles; to study and to inquire. As a man digs into the earth, to examine its contents, or to plant something, or to build something, so the spiritual man mentally seeks to penetrate beyond the surface of doctrines, and of the letter of the Word: he digs into these things, that he may see what is in their depths; that he may discover their treasures, or find room for further growth, or build up some better life. The man, in temptation, exclaims, "I have not strength to dig," because he feels unable to procure his own mental and spiritual living, by his own investigations. He knows that he must depend on the Lord for truth; and that if his neglect of the Lord's truth, and the abuse of it, should result in his loss of truth, he cannot recover truth by any effort of his own, apart from the Lord's revelation.

Begging.

"To beg, I am ashamed;" i.e., he feels that he cannot go to the Lord, asking for the truth, when he has already had the truth, and has abused and neglected it. He is scarcely willing, as yet, to make a full confession of his utter helplessness, and to beg for Divine mercy and assistance. He is in temptation. Evil spirits, infesting his mind, keep him in despair.

What He Will Do. But he resolves what he shall do, when put out of his stewardship; i.e., when he finds himself deprived of the riches of knowledge, by his neglect and abuse of them. In all these states of thought, the Lord is watching over the man, allowing him to come into humility and contrition, so that he may permit himself to be led into higher states of life. The man feels that he will be an outcast; and he seeks some way of providing for a future home. The action of the

unrighteous steward is simply representative, representing the mind, in its efforts to provide an eternal mental home in the Lord's good and true principles. The House, Etc. The steward wished to be received into the houses of the debtors, etc. The house of every man's spirit in his will, in his inward mind. In a good sense, when a man, by means of temptation, sees his own unworthiness, and fears spiritual death, and is led to repent and to reform, he is led out of the mental condition of a mere steward of other men's goods, a mere learner and thinker of truths, and is led into the more advanced condition of a lover of good, as one of the family. These are representative things, not seen in the mere letter of the parable. When truth ceases to be the ruling principle of a man's mind, and love takes its place, he is then no longer a mere steward, but is one of the family.

Calling The Debtors. The steward called the debtors. Literally, these debtors may have been merchants, receiving goods from the rich man's farm, or tenants, paying their rent in shares of the crop, Spiritually, every man is a debtor to the Lord. The natural man is forced to acknowledge his debt to the Lord; but the spiritual man loves to acknowledge it. No man can fully pay his debt to the Lord. But he can fully acknowledge his debt, and keep the Lord's commandments. The debtors to the Lord are our will and our understanding, in which we live. And so we find, in the parable, many debtors implied, but two, only, particularly mentioned; because all our spiritual debts are of two kinds, debts of the will and of the understanding; i.e., of the affectional life and of the intellectual life. The oil, warm and smooth, represents the things of our affections, which we call the good of love; while the wheat represents what we call the good of truth, the practical good of intellectual life. And the question, "How much owest thou?" is an inquiry of conscience, as to what we owe to our Lord, of the blessings of our twofold life; what good affections and true thoughts of our actual life are derived from the Lord. The Debts.

One debtor acknowledge a debt of one hundred measures of oil; and another, one hundred measures of wheat. Olive oil and wheat were the staple products of the Holy Land. So they are, representatively, as love and wisdom, the staple products of our spiritual life. One hundred is a general number, meaning all, or in general, a fullness. And, to acknowledge a debt of one hundred measures of oil, and of wheat, is to acknowledge that we owe to the Lord, all our goodness and all our practical truth. The Bill, Etc. To take the bill, and to sit down, quickly, and write down a certain number, means to define our indebtedness to the Lord, in exact terms, so that we shall comprehend our relation to our Lord. Sitting is a somewhat fixed position, relating to the state of the will. And we write-down our debt, in our hearts, when we desire and love to acknowledge it.

Numbers.

Numbers represent states and conditions of our mental life. One hundred represents what is full and complete. Fifty, when contrasted with one hundred, represents what is sufficient. No man can fully pay his debt to the Lord; but he can, now, let the dead past go, and begin a new career of goodness. He can do A that can be done to pay his debts in the future, by acknowledging them, and by ceasing from evil, and keeping the Lord's commandments. He cannot pay one hundred measures of oil; but he can pay fifty; i.e., he can do all that can now be done, to atone for the past, and to keep the future in good order. And the Lord will accept this, as sufficient; because no man can go back and undo the past, and remake it. If the man will now sit down in the truth, and write on his heart an acknowledgment of his debts to the Lord, and will keep the commandments, he will write his debt in his book of life, also; and from this he shall be judged. And, if he lives a new

career, his life will not be in the old career. And the past half of his debt will be cancelled. And no man can go back, and practice all the neglected truth of the past: he must improve the living present, and thus make the future. He cannot pay his one hundred measures of wheat. But, in temptation, he can endure, when tempted to deny and neglect the truth. And thus he can pay his present debt, as far as possible, by observing and following the truth, now and henceforth, in temptation and in prosperity.

Eighty.

Four score, or eighty, represents temptation; because it is twice forty; and forty represents a state of temptation, as we see by its use in the Scriptures. There were forty days of flood; the Israelites were forty years in the wilderness; Jesus was forty days in the desert, tempted of the devil, etc. Thus, to pay eighty measures of wheat, is to stand by the truth, in temptations, even double temptations, which attack both the affections and the thoughts. It is to live by the Lord's Word, in all things of the day life. These things are all that we can do, to pay our debt to the Lord. As to the past, we may well cry, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for, in Thy sight, no man living shall be justified."

Commending The Steward.

"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." It was not Jesus who commended, but the rich man, the lord or master of the steward. And, in using the steward as a representative, Jesus did not act without Divine reason. It was necessary to use some case in which the man was brought into fear of loss of his place, through his own neglect; and, therefore, no good and righteous steward would have afforded the necessary elements for the parable. But Jesus did not countenance the steward's unrighteousness, his fraud, his sin. He simply used the case to illustrate the man's forethought, prudence, worldly wisdom, prompt resolution, and executive ability; his readiness to meet a sudden emergency, and to provide for the future.

Policy. The word used in the ordinary translation is "wisely;" but this is not a good translation. We associate a moral goodness with the idea of wisdom: but it is not so with this Greek word: it means worldly-wise, prudent, as a wise policy, the prudence of the serpent, Now, these characteristics of prudence, etc., are commendable, as traits of character, even when they are used for a bad purpose. Industry, carefulness, promptness, punctuality, foresight, economy, resolution, executive ability, are to be admired, in any man, as traits of character. And we think of them, as apart from the spiritual character of the man.

So, in correspondence, we think of certain traits, apart from the general character. For instance, the keen far-sightedness of the eagle corresponds to the mental breadth and keenness of vision of the spiritual man. We consider the eagle, in this case, simply as to his keen sight, and not as to his fierceness, as a bird of prey. So, the rich man commended the steward, from the steward's own standpoint: he did well for himself; he showed ability to escape from a serious dilemma.

Wiser In Their Generation. And Jesus called the attention of His disciples to the fact that worldly men show more energy and wisdom, of their kind, and provide for themselves more prudently, than spiritual men are apt to, do, while in the physical world. "For the children of this world are, in their generation [literally, 'for their generation'] wiser than the children of light." The children of the world are the worldly-minded, who live for this world. And the children of light are those who have

been born again, into the world of spiritual light, the light of heavenly truth.

All states of human life are outbirths, generated by our ruling-love. The worldly man is a merely natural-minded generation. Everything in his character is generated by his love of the world. And so he lives for the world, only: he concentrates all his energy upon worldly things. And no wonder that he is more cunning, in his generation, than the spiritual man is in the world: for the spiritual man places his real life and energy in the inward world of spiritual life. "The serpent was more subtle than any [other] beast of the field." The senses, signified by the serpent, are wise in their generation; i.e., in outward things, and for the sensuous life; but for this, only. Serpents are more cunning than lambs or doves. And "owls can see better than eagles, in the dark."

Prudence Needed.

Thus, in the parable, our Lord teaches us, practically, that we should be as ready and able to look after our spiritual interests, as worldly men are to look after their worldly interests. And so, on sending out His disciples, he said to them, "Be ye, therefore, prudent as serpents, and harmless as doves." Our opportunities, our associations with each other, and all the circumstances of our life, might be made far more profitable to our spiritual life than we generally make them to be. And, in both natural and spiritual things, men of the church may well learn a lesson from the energy and tact of the men of the world.

Making Friends With Mammon.

And, in the concluding part of the parable, we notice that what the Lord commends is not mere activity, but faithfulness to the matter in hand. When the Lord says, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," He teaches us to use this world wisely, prudently, with prompt energy, skill and common sense, in order that we may make the things of this world act as friends to our spiritual life, and not as enemies. This world becomes our enemy, spiritually, when we love it for itself alone, forgetting heavenly principles; but it becomes our friend, when we secure the right use of it, as a training-school for heaven. Money and mental wealth will be "the mammon of unrighteousness to us, if abused. But the same things, when wisely used for spiritual life, cease to be unrighteous; but they will be friends, who will help to receive us into the mansions of heaven, because they will help to prepare us for heaven, in co-operation with the spiritual riches of heavenly truth.

Failing. When we "fail," is when we die; when this world fails longer to provide for us; and also when, spiritually, we see that the things of the world fail to satisfy the higher longings of the human soul.

Faithfulness. Our Lord said, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust in much:" because a man works from a certain principle of life, and that principle shows itself in the quality of its action, whatever may be the quantity of the act. "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things."

Least And Much. The "least" things are the beginnings of spiritual life: and, if a man is faithful to these, they will grow to be "much," Again, natural things are "least," and spiritual things are "much:" and he who is faithful in natural things is faithful in spiritual things, for the same inward

principle actuates him in both. A man who is dishonest to men is dishonest to the Lord. And a man who does not keep the commandments literally, does not keep them spiritually. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Unfaithfulness.

"If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" For, when we are unfaithful, the world becomes unrighteous to us; i.e., we love it, and act in it, unrighteously. And, when this is so, how can we expect to attain the higher life of heaven? If we will not be faithful to the letter of our Lord's Word, and of His commandments, how can we expect Him to trust us with the true riches of the inward and spiritual truth, that lies hidden from worldly eyes, in the profound depth of the spiritual meaning? When we neglect, or abuse, the truth, it dies out of our hearts and understandings, and remains in our memory, only; and then it does not govern our affection and thought, nor come into our daily life. And then, though it is our Lord's truth, it is not ours: we have not made it ours. "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own."

So, in the parable of "The Talents," the man who hid the one talent entrusted to him by his Lord, had even that one taken from him, and given to the man who had the ten talents. Thus, the truth that we will not use, we must lose. And the truth which we will not be faithful to, because it is the Lord's, we cannot make our own. But it would be our own, if we would make it so, by incorporating it into our life. The Work Of Life.

Thus, in this parable, our Lord teaches us to have one well-defined purpose in life; i.e., to be regenerated; and to bend all our energies to that great work, doing all we can to use the world as a friend and servant of the Lord. Thus we shall do all we can to pay our debt to our Lord, in and by our daily life. And then, inasmuch as we sincerely do good to the least of men, we shall do it to the Lord.

We can take part in the world's affairs, using common sense, skill, and energy, in performing uses; but not working in a merely worldly spirit. We can use the world as a friend to heaven, and not as an enemy; bravely and energetically, and with prudence and executive ability, following every truth that we know. And then, when natural things fail to satisfy our open spirits, the higher aspects of heavenly truths will "receive [us] into everlasting habitations."

39. The Rich Man and Lazarus.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

(Luke 16:19-31.) Worldly And Heavenly Riches.

Summary.

Genuine reformation results from an earnest reception of Divine truths in the will, understanding and life. Great wealth of knowledge, unaccompanied by a disposition to give by the truth, cannot result in regeneration. But a sincere and eager desire for spiritual truth, in order to govern the life by it, will open even the ignorant mind to the light and warmth of heaven. Centering the affections upon the things of the outward world, closes the heart to the appreciation of heavenly things, and makes the man unable, because unwilling, to receive heavenly life, either here or hereafter. The Contrast. In the parable, the picture is made up of opposites and extremes, sharp contrasts, in the life, in the death, and in the world to come. And, in the meaning of the parable, we must expect to find extremes of character. One man is rich, and the other poor; one is covered with purple and fine linen, and the other with rags and sores; one lives daintily, and in plenty, and the other receives but a few scraps to appease his hunger; one is attended by a company of slaves, obedient to his every whim, and the other is left, without human care, to the pity of the dogs; the body of one is buried with pomp and lamentation, and the loathsome carcass of the other is hurried to an unmarked grave, without a word of sympathy, or a tear of regret.

But, when the earth receives their bodies, the contrast does not end. One died amid luxury, and awoke to misery, as he sank into the abodes of the evil; but the other passed from the hard, cold stone, and from the neglect of harder and colder men, into the company of angels, in the spiritual world

Angels were as ready to lead the rich man's soul to heaven, as the poor man's; but he who had fixed his heart upon the good things of the material world, gave no heartfelt response to the angelic invitations, and felt no inward drawing towards the beatitudes of heaven.

Historical Application.

Historically, the parable refers to the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews were rich in possessing the Divine Word of the Old Testament; and thus they were able, if willing, to live in spiritual feasting. But the Gentiles were poor, in their ignorance of the Lord's Word. And the well-disposed among the Gentiles were desirous to be instructed from the Lord's Word. And, in the rejection of heavenly things by the Jews, and in the regeneration of many Gentiles, we see the application of the words, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."

Representative Meaning. In its abstract application, the parable refers to states and conditions of life, rather than to persons. The whole scene is laid in the individual mind of each regenerating man. Each of us has his rich man and his Lazarus, his worldliness and his spirituality of character. And, in each of us, the natural temptation is to favor the rich man of worldliness and to starve the

Lazarus of spirituality, as a mere beggar for inward life, amid the pomp and pleasures of sensuous existence.

Riches.

Spiritually speaking, a rich man is one who knows many truths of the Lord's Word, and who thus possesses the means of spiritual life. The Lord's Word, with its Divine truth, constitutes the riches of heaven. Especially are they rich, spiritually, who know the internal, spiritual meaning of the Lord's Word, and who thus see truth in its own spiritual light.

Purple And Fine Linen.

Symbolically, garments represent truths, which are the clothing of good principles. The letter of the Word of God clothes the naked truth of its inward meaning, and thus adapts it to natural men. Purple was the royal color. In the New-Church, we use the term knowledge, for what we know, of good, of truth, etc., all the various principles and facts known to the mind. The purple garment represented the knowledge of good, of things to be loved and done; and the fine linen garment represented the knowledge of truth, or things to be believed. The man whose mind is rich in the knowledge of good and truth is, spiritually, clothed in purple and fine linen.

Faring Sumptuously. And he fares sumptuously, every day; i.e., he has, in every state of life, in every condition of his affection and thought, the knowledge necessary to enable him to live upon heavenly principles. He feasts mentally. And he feels delight in what he knows. The Beggar.

Spiritually, a beggar is one who is without knowledge, and who seeks to know the things necessary to life. The word, Lazarus, means "without help;" i.e., without help of knowledge, or truth. Historically, Lazarus represents the Gentiles, who were without the help of the Lord's Word. But, individually, Lazarus represents the well-disposed Gentile state, in our minds, an ignorant, but childlike state, eager and willing to learn. The Gate. The gates of the rich were common places of resort for beggars, where they might expect both food from the house and money from the visitors. A gate serves to introduce to what is beyond and within. So a gate represents introductory truths, the teachings, or doctrines, which introduce the mind to that which it seeks. Every science has its introductory truths. The beggar was outside, seeking something from within, but was despised, and an outcast. So, to the Jews, the Gentiles were despised outcasts. And, so, in our natural minds, full of their sensuous self-importance, our childlike, humble, Gentile states of mind are apt to be regarded as things to be despised and cast out. The Beggar's Sores. The beggar was "full of sores;" i.e., the Gentile state of mind is full of natural false principles, being without genuine truth, although well-disposed. Good health makes a sound body, but bad blood often shows itself in sores. So, mentally, false principles show themselves in the outward life, keeping the mental circulation impure. So, we read, in Isaiah, concerning the natural mind, "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." As the natural body of poor Lazarus was repulsive and unclean, so the unregenerate natural mind of every man, even when ignorant and well-disposed, is spiritually unclean in the sight of angels.

Dogs.

Dogs represent those principles which, or those persons who, are on a very external and sensuous plane of life; who know little and talk much; but who often perform some very external

uses, and even vile uses. Sensuous good, like the dog, is faithful to its trust. The dog licking the sores, to heal them, represents the effort of natural good affections (however low in quality) to restore the mind to order. Men in such states have natural pity, and a desire to heal, or instruct, those who are in spiritual poverty, suffering from ignorance of truth, and from false principles of conduct.

Abraham's Bosom. The beggar died; i.e., he was removed from a natural to a spiritual state. And he was carried, by the angels, into Abraham's bosom. Abraham's bosom was a poetical and representative expression, common among the Jews, to represent paradise. John, the beloved disciple, was said to lie in Jesus' bosom, at the last supper. The bosom, where the heart is, represents love. Abraham represents the Lord, and his bosom represents the Lord's love.

Death Of The Rich Man.Hades. The rich man, also, died, and was buried; i.e., he passed into the spiritual world; but he sank into a sensuous, low condition, in which he was buried in sin.

"And in hell," (as the text commonly reads) "he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham," etc. The Greek word is "hades," which does not mean hell, but the world of spirits, the intermediate state, between death and the judgment, the paradise, into which the thief on the cross went to meet Jesus. Recognizing the common mistranslation, the New Version of the New Testament gives the word "hades," not hell. Hades is the first condition after death, into which all men go, and where the judgment occurs. Good persons pass through hades, or the world of spirits, into heaven, and the evil pass through it into hell.

Two Parts Of Hades.

But, as the man's final home is determined by his life in this world, according to his opportunities, so there are, practically, two sides to hades, the good side, in which good men are preparing to enter into heaven; and the bad side, in which evil men are preparing for hell. And so, practically, in the world of spirits, or hades, a man is in the beginnings of heaven or of hell. And, as evil character necessarily induces suffering, those who are in the evil side of hades must lie suffering, as they come more and more fully to develop their inward character. Still, while there, they can elevate their thought, to some extent, and can consider their condition; but, as their hearts are confirmed in evils, they are not willing to change their character. And they soon forget even the fact that they are evil.

Abraham Afar Off. The rich man (commonly called "Dives," which means rich) saw Abraham "afar off," because the character of the rich man was very far removed from a heavenly condition.

Cooling The Tongue. The rich man asked to have Lazarus wet his tongue with water. This cry was not a sincere prayer for reform and regeneration: it was a cry of misery, because he found himself in a state of restraint, where he could not pervert the truth, nor torment the good, in others, as he had done on earth, or in his own external mind.

Water represents literal truth, such as the commandments of life. And to cool the tongue is to assuage the man's mental thirst for attacking and perverting the truths of the Divine Word; i.e., of abusing and misapplying spiritual riches. For, in the world of spirits, as the evil man comes more and more into his real and inward character, he loses, more and more, even the knowledge of the truths which he would not use. The tongue, which speaks, represents the doctrine which is

spoken. We all know how hard it is for any one to be put in a position where he has to control his tongue, when he would like to speak evil and unkind things. And so, in the world of spirits, the evil man suffers, because he finds himself growing less and less able to attack and pervert true and good principles, as he loses even the knowledge of them. The flame in which he suffers is the fire of his own evil passions. Physical fire could not affect a spirit, who is in a spiritual body, formed of spiritual substance. Evil spirits feel punishment, in their inability to give vent to all their evil passions.

Good Things.

Abraham reminds the rich man that he had his good things in the natural world, because, as a natural-minded man, he fixed his heart upon the things of outward life, and regarded such things as the real and only good things; and so he had not fitted his mind to appreciate, and to enjoy, the good things of a heavenly life. The things of the sensuous life appear to be good: but, apart from spiritual life, they are not good, but evil. So, to the natural man, trials and temptations appear to be evil things; but they are the means of receiving the good things of spiritual life. And so the mind that is fixed upon worldly good things alone, seems to have its good things in this world, and yet it is not prepared for the genuine good things of heaven; and the mind that passes this life amid trials and sorrows, may become, by reformation, fitted for heavenly good things. And the life of evil necessarily leads to sorrow. The Psalmist speaks of "men of the world, whose portion is in this life." And Jesus said to the worldly rich men, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation."

Circumstances Only Means.

Neither a state of poverty nor one of riches can be, in itself against a man. A good man can make any circumstances afford him an opportunity to act from good principles; as a good sailor can make a wind from any direction carry him into port. As, by "tacking," the mariner can sail directly against the course of the wind, so a good man can turn adverse influences to serve his purposes. Neither knowledge, nor the want of knowledge, will either save or condemn any man; but the use or abuse of what he knows. Much knowledge, used for sensuous life, may give sensuous pleasure, but spiritual misery: and little knowledge may occasion trial and temptation, but, well used, may lead to heavenly joy. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." Often, both literally and spiritually, "They that did feed delicately are in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills." The Great Gulf.

After death, men do not change their character. "There is a great gulf [or chasm] fixed" between the evil and the good; not merely in location, but also, and primarily, in character. The great chasm that separates the evil man from heaven is in his own heart, and in his own life. Good and evil are opposites: they cannot live together: there is nothing in common between them. Goodness lives in the glad reception of life from the Lord; but evil lives in the fierce rejection of all Divine and heavenly good and truth. What is heaven to one, would be hell to the other. As to mere locality, the Lord can send angels on errands of mercy to the hells, when He so desires, and when any good can be accomplished thereby. But, as the evil spirits hate good, they hate the angels, and are tormented by their presence, as the diseased eye is tormented by the sunlight. There is nothing good that the Lord and the angels would not do for the devils, to help them; but the devils are utterly unwilling to receive any help of a heavenly character. The man who, in this life, abuses his

mental and material riches, is like a player in a theater, who, for a little season, assumes the part of a rich man; but who, when the play is over, throws off his robes, and goes home to a hovel. The Brethren, Etc. The five brethren of the rich man are all who are in a similar state, and who are mentally his brethren. His father's house is the condition of his ruling-love, and the things derived from it. The evil mind desires to pervert the truth. And, if it cannot do this, then it still seeks to have liberty given to all the brethren of the mind, all the false principles in the natural mind, derived from, or fathered by, the ruling love. When the man finds himself fixed in his evil life, he still hopes to have liberty to exercise his evil desires and false thoughts.

And, in the intermediate state, before the judgment, if, in a moment of elevated understanding, he claims that he was in ignorance of the truth, and so should not be judged by it, he will be shown that he had the Word of the Lord, in which is all truth, adapted to all and every state of mind and life, in men. And he will be taught that all the things in him, even those which he thought were good and true, are tainted with the quality of his ruling-love; that all the brethren of his mind have the same general character, and the same opposition to all good and truth.

Moses And The Prophets.

"They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them." "Moses and the prophets," or "the law and the prophets," represent the whole of the Old Testament Word of God, The books of Moses and the prophecies, were, especially, read in all the Jewish synagogues: and hence no Jew had any excuse for being ignorant of the Divine commandments. To "hear" "Moses and the prophets," is to hear them in the memory, and to be instructed; to hear them in the understanding, and to believe; and to hear them in the heart, and to love and obey.

Receiving The Truth.

Truth carries its own evidence to the mind that is open to it. The mind to which truth is demonstrated by "the self-evidencing reason of love," needs no external demonstration. The natural man calls for signs and wonders, because he is not open to the light of truth. What the evil man needs, is not more evidence of truth, but more disposition to believe the truth. Evidence of spiritual truth is never sufficiently strong, or sufficiently abundant, to convince the man who is not disposed to receive it. And, in fact, it would be dangerous to compel a man to believe what he is not willing to accept; for then he would be guilty of profaning the truth, and thus in greater condemnation.

Learning From The Dead.

Visions, and talking with the dead, never confirm a man in truth that is against his ruling-love. The Lord could easily compel every man intellectually to see the truth, if that would be of any use to the man. Jesus, Himself, rose from the dead; but that fact did not convince His enemies of His Divine character, or of the truth of His teachings. And it is noticeable that, after His resurrection, Jesus did not show Himself to His enemies, but only to His disciples. Saul did not reform his character, after his attempt to call up Samuel from the dead, through the witch of Endor. And, in fact, he disobeyed the Divine law when he consulted a witch, to call up the dead. The Word of the Lord teaches principles, and precepts of life, adapted to all men. And no man, rising from the dead, could teach truth in any better way than it is taught already, in the Scriptures. The New Church Vs. Spiritism. This is the inherently weak point in modern Spiritism: it has nothing new to say; and it seeks to

prove to the outward senses what ought to be seen by spiritual insight. And it should be called Naturalism, not Spiritualism. How different the mission of Swedenborg. He was illuminated by the Lord, that he might be an instrument to open the Scriptures, and to open men to the Scriptures; and to show men that all truth is in the holy Word of the Lord, not only in its letter, but also in its inward, spiritual sense. And so, in fact, Swedenborg offers the only effective antidote to modern Spiritism. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." And nothing that arises from the spiritually dead state of our own evils, can convince us of any truth.

Belief Not Compelled.

Miracles did not convince those who were opposed to the Lord's principles. "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." And, in His own country, "Jesus did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief" And yet, if miracles were intended to compel belief, they would seem to have been most needed where unbelief was most prevalent. And in these days, men who ascribe all things to nature, would not listen to any one claiming to come from the spiritual world. And men cannot be frightened into heaven. Fear of hell will not produce love of the goodness and truth which make heaven. Heaven is positive, not negative.

It is a law of the Divine Providence, that a man shall, as of himself, remove evils, as sins, in his external man, and thus, and not otherwise, the Lord can remove evils in the internal man, and, at the same time, in the external man. A man in whom evil rules is, already, a hell; and the man in whom heavenly principles rule is, already, a form of heaven. Regeneration cannot be effected, except by hearty and sincere reception of the principles of Divine Truth, in the heart, understanding and life. The parable emphasizes the contrast between being rich in worldliness and rich in goodness. The contrast is not precisely between heaven and hell, but between those states of life on earth which finally make heaven and hell.

40. The Unprofitable Servant.

The Unprofitable Servant.

(Luke 17:7-10.) The Natural Mind Serving The Spirit.

Summary. No man can do more than his duty to the Lord. For, as soon as it is clear to him, that it lies in his power wisely to do certain good uses, it becomes his duty to do them. For it is always a man's duty to do all the good that lies in his power, in keeping the Lord's commandments. The Literal Sense. In the literal sense, the meaning is clear. As a servant, in performing his usual duty, does not place his master under special obligation; so men, the servants of the Lord, cannot claim any merit for their service. In the text, the servant was a bond-servant, whose relation to his master was much less independent than that of a servant in our day, in our country.

Master And Servant.

We have two minds, or two parts of our mind, the natural and the spiritual. And the relation of master and servant exists between our spiritual and internal mind, and our natural or external mind. The servant is the natural mind, or natural man, which learns truth, and does good, as of itself, but from the indwelling spirit, and according to the desires and commands of the spirit.

Plowing. The servant is said to be "plowing, or feeding cattle," or, literally "feeding the flock," meaning sheep. The servant plows the ground, to prepare it to receive the seed, and to bring forth the crop. So, a man spiritually plows, when he prepares his mind to receive the seed of Divine truth, that the seed may produce a crop, in the deeds of his daily life. Plowing the ground especially refers to the preparation of the understanding for the intelligent reception of Divine truths from the Lord's Word.

Feeding The Sheep. And feeding the flock of sheep, refers to the cultivation of the will, or heart. Sheep correspond to charity, or love to the neighbor. And feeding the sheep, or taking care of them, represents cultivating charity. Both the culture of the understanding, and of the will, are good uses, of a high order, requiring sincerity, industry, and obedience to the commands of the Divine Master. The Servant's Work. And yet these uses are performed by the servant, the natural mind, as of itself, yet actually from the influence of the inward, spiritual mind, We must compel ourselves to heed the teachings of the Lord's Word, and to learn these teachings, as precepts and doctrines; and we must make an effort to break up our old natural conditions of thought and feeling, in order that we may be in a state to receive the new truths which the Lord reveals to us. And we must determinedly resist our wrong feelings, and try to feel as the Lord teaches us to feel, towards Him, and towards our fellow-men. And the work of thus plowing, or preparing our minds, and of feeding the sheep, or cultivating our good affections, is our daily labor, as servants of our Lord. And our natural minds must do this work, in their way, on their plane, as servants of our spiritual minds.

Illustration. For instance: we are not to indulge our anger, simply because we are so inclined, but we are to resist the inclination, because the Lord teaches us that anger is evil. And we are not to

expect that our inward, spiritual mind will lift us out of all tendencies towards anger; but we are to resist the natural desire and tendency when, and whenever, they arise; and our inward, spiritual minds will exert their influence, in giving us light to see our duty, and in supporting our efforts to do our duty. So, the master does not do the servant's work, but he commands the servant, directs him, and supports him.

Spiritual And Natural. And the parable refers to this relation between our external, or natural, mind, and our internal, or spiritual, mind. The spiritual mind, or spiritual part of the mind, enlightens, directs, commands, and supports, the natural mind, or natural part of the mind. And the natural mind, as of itself, receives and obeys the commands of the spiritual mind. This is the orderly and heavenly relation, in the regenerate condition; and, in this state, both the spiritual mind and the natural mind are filled with happiness, each in its own degree.

But, when this heavenly relation is interrupted, the whole man is brought into disorder, and into unhappiness. For the natural mind cannot see clearly, and act wisely, without the influence of the spiritual mind; and, without the practical activity of the natural mind, the spiritual mind cannot have its outward uses performed. The servant and the master must depend upon each other. The Field. Work And Rest. The servant is said to come in from the field. The field is the natural life, where the actual work is done, where truth is learned, and good affections are developed. We have alternations of state, sometimes working, and sometimes resting. The rest, after work, represents the mental rest of peace and delight, after the labor of learning and cultivating good principles. We labor in resisting our evil tendencies, and in compelling ourselves to do good. And we rest when our spiritual mind gains control over our natural mind.

Eating And Drinking, Etc. To eat food, and to drink, mean mentally to eat; to receive, and accept as our own, the good and true principles of the Lord's Word. These are our spiritual food. As the Lord said, "My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." To sit down, being a somewhat fixed position, means to fix the will upon what we are doing. To sit down and eat, is to fix our will upon the good and true principles which come to us from our Lord, and to appropriate these principles; to make them our principles of life. And, in this reception of spiritual food, there is delightful spiritual rest. The Master Served First. But the natural mind cannot enter into this rest, nor be filled with spiritual food, until, through its service, the spiritual mind has first been filled. And so the servant serves his master, and, afterwards, sits down to his own supper. Thus the master says, "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and, afterward, thou shalt eat and drink."

Making Ready. To make ready, is to have the natural mind do its preparatory work of learning the doctrines of the Church, and of resisting evil inclinations, and of keeping the Lord's commandments. When the natural mind, as a servant, does these things, it prepares the supper for the master, the spiritual mind. Thus it opens the door, that the Lord may come in, and sup with the spiritual mind, and that the spiritual mind may sup with Him. The man must have the knowledge of truth before he can apply them. Conjunction with the Lord is by knowledge of truth, love of truth, and a life of truth. And the man must make ready to receive the Lord, by casting out the things that oppose the Lord.

Girding. To gird one's self, is to gather up the long skirt of the robe, and to hold it up by the girdle, or belt; thus leaving the feet free for moving about. Garments represent knowledge, truths known.

These are spiritually girded up, lifted up from the feet, when, from love, the man elevates his mind, lifting up these truths, to see them in their higher phases, in connection with spiritual things. Thus the natural mind, as the servant, girds himself, and serves the spiritual mind, as the master, until the master has eaten and drunken; i.e., until, by the practice of good principles, as Divine truths, the inward spirit is brought into conjunction with heaven and-the Lord.

Serving. The Divine principles are fixed, confirmed, in the spiritual mind, by being sincerely done in the natural mind and life; and then the Divine influences can flow through the spiritual mind, and fill the natural mind, also. Then both the servant and the master can feed upon spiritual food and drink.

But, if the natural mind attempts to satisfy itself, first, and in its own worldly way, before serving the spiritual mind, it will not elevate itself to heavenly phases of truth; but it will see and receive worldly, natural things, only. Then it will fall into disorder and error. Thus, it can serve itself best, by serving the spiritual mind first; for it must serve the Lord, in the light, and by the guidance, of the spirit. "Seek ye first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these [external] things shall be added unto you."

Throughout human history, all departures from good, and from spirituality of character, have arisen in the attempt of the natural mind to serve itself first. This was the "fall of man" as figuratively portrayed in the departure from Eden, under the advice of the subtle serpent, the natural senses, in the low and groveling form of life. No man can reach -heaven from the senses, without the direction of an enlightened spirit; for no man can receive and appropriate the good that is in any truth, in his natural mind, until after he has interiorly acknowledged it to be the Lord's truth, and until he has loved it, and done it, as the Lord's.

Regenerate Order. The internal, the spirit, must first be brought into regenerate order; and only when the spiritual mind acts from regenerate affections, can the natural mind give up its self-will, and act from heavenly motives, guided by the spirit. Heaven comes to men inwardly. "The kingdom of God is within you." And the natural mind and life are filled with regenerate life, through the spiritual mind. The servant must first serve his master, and, afterwards, he may eat and drink. The natural mind is nourished and filled with heavenly life, in the degree in which it serves the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind looks to the spiritual world, and the natural mind looks to the natural world. And so, what a man does, in the natural mind and life, from the regenerate spiritual mind, he does from heaven, and from the Lord. But what he does from his natural mind, alone, he does from himself. No Obligation.

But, when the natural mind serves the spiritual mind, the spiritual mind is not under any obligation to the natural mind; for the latter cannot attain its own best condition, except through what it does for the spirit. "Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not." That is, the master does not feel under any special obligation to the servant. It is the law of heavenly order, for the external to serve the internal, the body to serve the mind, the natural mind to serve the spirit. So, in the physical body, the outward skin serves the heart and lungs, which are internal; and the skin finds its own happiness, and maintains its own order, only in so far as it serves the vital organs.

Unprofitable Servants.

So, likewise, ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." That is, we produce no extra profit for the Lord, beyond our ordinary duty. And, in serving the Lord, we find our own life. Men have nothing of which they should boast. They can do no more than their duty., And they must depend upon the Lord to give them light to see their duty, and strength to do it.

All merit is in the Lord, and not any in man. No man can do any real good, except in the name of the Lord. Men are merely recipients of the Divine Life, each in his degree, as to quality and quantity. And the most any man can do, is to prepare himself to serve the Lord, and to find his happiness in keeping the Lord's commandments. There is no merit in a man's keeping the laws which it is his best interest to keep. But the unregenerate natural man ascribes merit to himself. And yet, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." See the little brook, gradually swelling to the proportions of a majestic river, and carrying a flood of waters to the sea. But, does the river imagine that it is doing great favors to the sea? Whence came the waters of the river? From the sea, by evaporation, and clouds, and the rain. And well may the mighty ocean say to the flowing river, "Without me, ye can do nothing." And, through the whole universe, there is a circulation of life from the Lord, going out into all things, filling and moving each according to its organization; performing uses, blessing all, and returning to the Lord, through the thankful hearts and lives of regenerate men.

Humility. The parable teaches us a lesson of humility. And its truths are very unwelcome to him who lives for praise. All that we can do is only our duty. And where are the men who have done all that they could have done, in every thing? And, if we could find any such, they would be the very ones who would not claim any merit for themselves. The old idea that the Church on earth is a communion of saints is all wrong; it is a band of fellow-sinners, confessing their evils, and looking to the Lord for help.

Man's Two-Fold Nature.

It is a beautiful order of life, in man, when his spiritual, internal mind has full government over his obedient natural mind; when all his life as an animal is under the control of his life as a regenerate spirit. In this blessed condition, his animal nature is not destroyed, but refined and humanized. Its delights are still permitted, but they are made rational and pure. The condition of man, half human, half beast, was well represented in ancient symbolic mythology, by the sphinx, the centaur, and the satyr, half human, but also half lioness, or half horse, or half goat. But, in each case, the human side was above, uppermost, and the animal side below. The body, or part of it, was, in each case, a beast, but the head, which directed it, was human. And how true to nature are these representations. In human nature we find aspiring intelligence, and refined affections, coupled with the grossness of a beast. Do we not recognize the likeness, in our own hereditary nature? And blessed be the Lord, that He shows us how to tame the beast, and helps us to rise above it.

You say it is hard to rise beyond the beast's low influence. Yes; it is always hard for the hells to submit to the heavens. And our unregenerate natural man is infernal. And the more strongly the lower nature holds us, the harder it is for us to break away. But we have the perfect example of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in His assumed humanity. And what He did, as a man on earth, He gives us light and strength to accomplish, in our degree. Generations of indulgence have unduly developed the strength of our animal nature.

Illustration.

Imagine yourself walking along a road, and suddenly seeing a beautiful child, held in the clutches of a demon. Horror would stir your heart to instant and great exertion, to destroy the horrid demon, and to rescue the imperiled child. But, do we not now see this terrible spectacle? Is it not, in some measure, the case with us all? Is there not, in each of us, the Lord's child of the soul, held in the strong grasp of the demon of our self-love? And is not that lovely child in imminent peril? Do not our hereditary inclinations hold us in their grasp, like the folds of the serpent about the body of Laocoon? But for the countless and constant mercies of Infinite Love, our spiritual life would be crushed and destroyed. Our Selfish Life.

Indeed, how hard we try, in our days of folly, to give full control to the natural mind, and to forget that heavenly order, and truly human life, are in the submission of the external to the internal, the natural to the spiritual, the servant to the master.

How tired we grow, in the work of serving the Master first; and how tired we are, in waiting for the time when the natural mind can sit down to its own meat. And, indeed, how little we recognize the help we could give to each other, towards coming into the heavenly order, if we would only act more from a regenerating spirit, and less from our envious natural feelings.

Possibilities.

Every human being, man, woman, or child, no matter what his or her condition, ought to be intensely interesting to us. In every person, we should see but a human soul, struggling in the grasp of a demon. And we should throw our influence, our affection, and our help, on the side of the human part, and against the demon.

But, how little we meet each other on this plane. The peculiarities, the looks, the clothing, all the externals of others, take up too much of our attention. We may see, in another, only the brutal side, while, within all that, there is a little babe of regenerate life, just awaking to the beginnings of conscious existence. And each one of us has it in his power to do something towards the development, or the discouragement, of that struggling heavenly babe.

Spiritual Purposes. Would that we had the manly courage always to work for spiritual ends, even in the externals of our life. The great trouble with most men, to-day, is that they do not elevate their minds, to see things in spiritual light; but are in the habit of regarding everything, even religion, in a crude external way, and from the senses. But every external thing should be associated with its inward life. We should value the external because of its connection with its internal.

Illustration. For instance: what draws your heart and your thought towards a dear little child who has gone before you to the heavens, more than his little shoe, carrying in its familiar outlines, the form of the little foot that once filled it? And yet, of all the things associated with the form of your dear little child, his shoe is the most external, and it belonged to the lowest and least important part of his body.

But, when the empty shoe lies before you, memory and affection seem to bring back the whole form of the loved one, to take his place. The little foot seems to return to the empty shoe; and, with the foot, comes the entire form. And, in fact, what is the bodily form, but the external of the real child, the soul, that you love?

During the life of your little boy, on earth, how carefully and tenderly you provided proper shoes for his little feet, that they might not cause him pain. And did you not as carefully, and as tenderly, try to lead him into such externals of feeling, thought and conduct, as would properly serve his opening spirit, without injury to its growing life? Did you not remember that all things that this outward world can afford your child, are, to his human spirit, only what the shoes are to the feet that fill them? They are externals, but important, as serving, or restraining, the growing spirit, within.

41. The Unjust Judge.

The Unjust Judge.

(Luke 18:1-8.) Persistent Prayer.

Summary.

Persistent effort to attain regeneration will finally succeed. And so, he who is seeking regeneration needs to keep his spiritual mind always open to the Lord's influences, in spite of the opposition of his natural mind. Even when false principles hold control of the natural thought, an earnest desire of the heart, longing for truth, will always succeed in gaining such truth as the man is willing to use in his daily life. In His Divine Truth, the Lord is always present with all men who seek Him, and according to their mental condition; and He always delivers them from their spiritual enemies, as soon as they are in condition to enter into regenerate life. The Moral.

Generally, in the parables of the Scriptures, we gather the moral of the story at the close of the parable; but, it is noticeable that, in the parable before us, and in the other parable in the same chapter, the moral is stated just before the story. And so it is not at all difficult to enter into the natural lesson of this parable, when the key has been left in the door. Parables are natural pictures, illustrating spiritual truths. In each case, the picture is painted with a pre-existing purpose. And the details of the picture are arranged according to the necessities of the case. The Literal Sense. For instance; in this parable, the purpose is to illustrate the need of earnest and persistent effort to attain regeneration. In the natural picture, the point is the persevering importunity, which will not be put off.

It seems hard to make any comparison between the Lord and an unjust judge; for the Lord is always just, and always merciful, and always seeking to bless men. But the necessities of the case required the use of a bad judge, to form the intended picture. A good and just judge, doing prompt justice, would not have presented the necessary elements. It was necessary to show the case of a person who eagerly, repeatedly, and, for a time, vainly, sought justice; and none but an unrighteous judge would have repeatedly refused to do justice. The Appearance. And the real character of such a judge is such as the unregenerate natural man imagines to be the character of the Lord. To those who wait long and wearily, for justice to be done to them, and for relief from daily trials, the Lord seems to be indifferent, and even unjust, because He does not sooner answer their prayers. And when the Lord seems to take no notice of them, they are tempted to cease praying, as if prayer was of no practical use. They do not know that the Lord is more desirous to bless them than they are to be blessed; nor that the cause of the delay is in themselves, in their own unreceptive condition of heart and life. The Delay.

It is not intended that men shall have whatever they think they want, merely for the superficial asking. And so we find this element of apparent Divine delay in answering prayer, in many cases, in the Scriptures. But the fact is, that the Lord cannot give a man spirituality of character, until the man is prepared to receive it, by reformation in the life. And the Lord cannot give any man spiritual

blessings, except as the man comes into spirituality of character. It is character, and not circumstance, which opens men to heavenly blessings. The Picture. The parable is only a picture, a representative. Spiritually, the scene is laid in the mind of every man, in the beginning of his career towards regeneration. We have both the judge and the widow in our own minds. And, if we are earnest and persistent, the Lord will compel our judge to do justice to our widow. The Lesson.

Literally, the natural lesson of the parable is this: if, by earnest, persistent importunity, a cold-hearted, indifferent man can be won over to the cause of justice, how much more we can be sure that the Lord, who is a just judge, will always do us justice, even when He seems to forget us. And, from this lesson, it follows that we are to be patient and persevering, knowing that there is sufficient reason for any apparent delay of Divine aid.

These truths apply to us, individually, and to the Church, collectively. Though the New-Church is struggling against many persecutions, yet the Lord is building up the Church, as fully and as rapidly as the characters and lives of its members will permit. And if we are impatient as to the results, our remedy lies in greater personal devotion to the principles of the Church, in our own hearts, understandings and lives. "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." The promise is made to us, as it was to Israel, "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread, shall be yours." No one can take away from us the blessings of any spiritual principle that we have actually walked upon. Our lesson is to wait for the Lord, but to work while waiting; and to trust in the Lord; knowing that the cause of our waiting is the need of greater work, in ourselves.

Always Praying.

"And He spake a parable unto them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." We cannot, of course, expect to be always in the outward act and attitude of prayer; for, in such case, we should not have time or opportunity to perform our uses. But a man can be, if he will, always in a prayerful state of mind, open to the heavens, acknowledging his evil tendencies, and ready to hear, and to receive, what the Lord has to give. If a man keeps his mind always open to heavenly influences, he will always be in a state of inward worship, the worship of love and acknowledgment. There will always be, in his heart, "a fire burning upon the altar." And the man will be full of vigorous spiritual life. For the most persistent, and the most efficient, of all prayers, is that of the daily life.

Fainting.

But, if the man grows indifferent to heavenly things, and allows the clamor of the world to shut out the voices of the heavens, his spiritual life will grow "faint" and inactive. As our bodies need their daily supply of food, so do our spirits. He who knows the character of the Lord, and the nature of man, and the true nature and use of prayer, as a means of bringing men into states capable of receiving blessings from the Lord, will feel the need of his morning and evening prayer, and his daily family worship, with the reading of the Word of the Lord. He knows, by experience, how these seasons of looking upward, strengthen him for both the common things, and the emergencies, of daily life in the world. The Judge. In our minds, the "judge" is the rational principle, the thinking faculty, which hears, compares, reflects, and decides, as to the things which come to the thought. Of course, in an unregenerate man, the rational faculty, itself, will be unregenerate; for all parts of

the mind need to be regenerated. So, the unregenerate natural man thinks and reasons from his own standpoint, which is sensuous and selfish. He loves himself; and he loves the world, in so far as it caters to his self-love. His rational faculty being open to the world, and closed to heaven, thinks in worldly light, which is spiritual darkness. It is an unjust judge; it does not fear God, nor regard men; it is not moved by heavenly principles of love, nor by acknowledged rules of human justice. False principles control its reasonings; and self-interest determines its action.

Fearing God, And Regarding Men.

Speaking spiritually, the fear of God is the fear which accompanies love, the fear of loving evil and doing evil; not a fear of the Lord, but a fear of doing anything which is against God. And to regard man is to regard the principle of charity, or love to the neighbor, which embodies itself in doing good to men. So, in the regenerate man, the regenerate rational faculty thinks in the spiritual light of heavenly truth; and it does justice to men. And the Lord teaches us that, as we act towards men, so we act towards Him. But it is said of the wicked, "there is no fear of God before his eyes." The City. The "city" in which the judge lived, is the doctrine in which the mind dwells. Imagine the state of society, where the judges are unjust, or even indifferent to justice. Then, as we read in Isaiah, "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter." And, spiritually, a corresponding state of things exists in the unregenerate mind, whose rational faculty is employed in behalf of self-love, and indifferent to heavenly principles of life, fearing not God, nor regarding man. The Widow. The "widow," dwelling in the same city, is the affection for truth, interested in the same doctrine. In the spiritual degree of life, characterized by truth, and represented by Israel, the husband represents the understanding of truth, and the wife represents the affection for truth. The widow, bereaved of her husband, represents the natural affection for truth, not united to the understanding of truth, and thus being in a state of distress, deprived of her guide and helper. The parable pictures a state of mind, in which the rational faculty is in the darkness of false principles, and in the light of the world; while there is, in the same mind, some love of truth, which seeks and desires the light of truth; but which cannot, at present, receive any satisfaction, because the reasoning faculty is tied down to the false and sensuous ideas of selfish life, and it will not listen to the distressed cry of affection, for more light. This affection for truth, represented by the widow, expels the rational faculty, as the appointed judge, to do justice; to free the natural affections from all the mental adversaries that persecute it, all the doubts, etc., and all the wrong states of contrary feeling.

Seeking Justice. And so the widow "came to the judge," seeking justice. Literally, she "came often to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary," or "Do me justice of mine adversary." She was not seeking revenge, but merely asking her rights, when some one had defrauded her. When our natural affection for truth is persecuted by evil, as it must be, when our character is a mixed one, we look to our rational faculty to deliver us, by judging what is true and good, and by helping us to put away evil and false things. Evil is an adversary to our minds, as disease is an adversary to our bodies.

But, as long as our natural evils engage the attention of our reasoning faculty, the latter will be under control of false principles; and it will be unwilling to take sides with our love of truth. Then our minds will be in a divided state, our love of truth desiring to secure the truth, and our natural self-love unwilling to release our reason from its control. The Judge Unwilling.

So, when the widow applied to the judge, for justice, "He was unwilling for a while;" etc. But, what the unjust judge was not willing to do from good principle, he was compelled to do from policy. It is the tendency of despotic rulers, moved by self-will and caprice, rather than by fixed laws, to cultivate among the people a dependence upon the favors of the rulers, rather than upon right and justice. In Oriental lands, under despotic government, beggars were numerous and clamorous. So, too, crowds assembled, and clamored for some favor which had been denied them; and the annoyance of their continued clamor often brought them success. The Judge Compelled.

So, in the natural mind, when the affection for truth is earnestly persistent in clamoring for light, the indifferent or indolent reasoning faculty, is finally aroused to activity. The thought arises, that this eager natural love of truth is determined to find the truth; and so, after all, it will be less troublesome to give way to it, than to continue to resist its importunities.

Policy And Principle.

Thus, policy often urges a man to find the truth, for the practical use of his better affections. For the man who is beginning to be regenerated is divided in mind. The Lord is operating upon his affections, and urging them to follow the truth. And so his affections urge his reasoning faculty to set to work, to grasp the genuine truth, so that his doubts, and the persecutions of evil spirits, may be driven out.

And, as the reasoning faculty itself comes under the influence of Divine Truth, the Lord operates upon it, to regenerate it: and then it will work from good principle, and no longer from policy. Thus, even if false principles hold our rational faculty, still, if we have some love of truth, we shall gradually be led to see that our false views are not true; and then we shall reject them. Every earnest, persistent desire for truth, will finally obtain the truth, even though it may have to struggle long and hard, against natural false notions, and a natural tendency to worldliness.

Hearing The Judge.

"Hear what the unjust judge saith;" i.e., we need to consider this state of things in our natural mind and life, and to recognize the fact that no man naturally thinks in the spiritual light of truth, but in the outward light of the world and of the senses; that no man is, at first, truly rational, but that he must become so, through regeneration; and that we must expect our natural rational faculty to be indifferent, and even opposed to seeking the light of heaven, when urged by our affections, under the influence of the Lord. And our affections cannot be purified, except through the truth, known, loved and practiced.

Representative Laws. The Laws given to Israel included many warnings to men against unrighteous judgment, and against oppressing widows. And all these laws spiritually apply to us, to-day, warning us not to allow our rational faculty to reason on the side of evil and falsity, and against good and truth; and especially, not to oppress and persecute the growing love of truth, which our Lord is filling with an earnest desire for spiritual life. The Just Judge. The rational faculty, like a just judge, should judge righteously and fearlessly between the different principles of the mind, all the different kinds of affection and thought; giving to each its proper place, and its full liberty to do its duty; encouraging every good affection and true thought, and casting out every evil feeling and false thought.

Imposition. As the widow, bereaved of her natural protector and guide, was peculiarly liable to be imposed upon, and defrauded, by unscrupulous persons; so our affection for truth, deprived of its guide, the understanding of truth, is especially liable to be imposed upon by evil influences. And, as the poor widow, unable to procure sufficient social influence to compel justice at the hands of the judge, or money enough to bribe him, was apparently powerless before him, so, when our natural minds are without the understanding of truth, our affection for truth seems powerless to overcome the indifference of the indolent rational faculty.

Final Success.

And, yet, as the widow's importunity finally accomplished what was not yielded in obedience to love of God or justice to men; so we may find encouragement in the thought that however dark spiritual things may seem to us, and however much our rational faculty may be disinclined to work for our love of truth, still, if we have some love for the truth, and some eager longing to find the truth, and to use it in our daily life, we shall finally obtain all the truth that we are ready to put into practice. The Delays Our Own.

And, while there may seem to be unnecessary delay, the simple fact is, that the Lord has been waiting for us to become inwardly and heartily ready for the truth. For we often hold truths as sentiments, long before we are ready to yield them full obedience, as principles of our daily life. And, in His tender mercy, our Lord protects us from too full an understanding of truths which we would not yet heartily adopt. The Elect Crying.

"Shall not God avenge His own elect?" God's "elect" are those who elect, or choose, to love and obey Him. These "cry to Him day and night;" i.e., in states of enlightenment, and in states of darkness and doubt. Thus, in every state of mind and life, they acknowledge the Lord, and look to Him for direction and strength. There are mental nights in our life, when we cannot see the light of truth, and when we may imagine that our Lord is not doing all He can for us.

But, if we keep His commandments, He will deliver us from all adversaries, as fast as we are ready, even when our "foes are those of our own [mental] household," our own evil feelings and false thoughts. He will compel even our own unjust judge to do us justice; He will finally regenerate our rational faculty, so that it shall see and know the heavenly truth.

Bearing With Them. The common translation reads, "though He bear long with them," as if He was the one who bears the trouble. The literal meaning is that He makes them bear a long trial, and He bears it, with them. But, truly, the Lord is bearing with them, and bearing their natural evils and fables, even when they think they are bearing the persecutions of others. At one time, during a storm, the disciples thought Jesus was indifferent to their peril; and they called Him, saying, "Carest Thou not, that we perish?" Then He rebuked the wind and the sea, and saved His disciples. The Lord leads us towards permanent good; and we need to wait and work, before we can attain such good. All apparent delay of the Lord is, really, our delay to come up to the full measure of spiritual manhood.

Illustration.

See two families, living as neighbors. In one, the parents indulge their children, and have not sufficient strength of character to say, No, when No is needed. In the other family, the parents are

conscientious in training their children in character. They often deny the requests of their children. Now, which family will be better prepared for the battle of life? And which parents have genuine love for their children? Undoubtedly, the stricter parents have a higher quality of love. They bear the trial, themselves, to save their children; while the weaker parents, being selfish, love their children as parts of themselves, and indulge them as they indulge themselves. And they weakly make it easy for themselves, and allow their children to grow up to far greater trials than home discipline, and trials which such discipline would have avoided. But the Lord, like the wise parents, often says, No, to His children, because He sees it is not best for them to have what they want, and as they want it. He trains for character. We need not be discouraged, when things move slowly, for the Divine Providence always works as rapidly as it can work well. The Lord is in every good desire; and He will carry it to success, if we do our part, by resisting our evil inclinations, and keeping His commandments. Patience develops the best traits of our character, and modifies our natural ambition. If there were no hunger and thirst, our food and drink would be insipid to us.

Divine Methods.

Again, we are apt to forget that, in waiting, our Lord is looking not only to our redress, but also to the good of our persecutors; and further patience on our part may be the very means which our Lord will use to reform our oppressors. And this is true, both naturally and spiritually. That the Lord will avenge His elect "speedily," means surely. There is no time in spiritual things; and the idea of working quickly, changes to that of working certainly.

"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" This question is put, because the quality of our faith will be shown in our prayers, from the heart and understanding, and in the life. We need to take heed to the condition of our minds and lives, so that, when the Divine truth comes, we may be in a state to receive it. The Lord's Second Coming.

These are the days of the coming of the Lord, in a spiritual coming of Divine Truth to the minds of men. But how is this truth received? How much faith and charity are there, in the world? 'The love of many [has waxed] cold.' Few have any vigorous faith in the Divine character and personality of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one, only God, or in the absolutely Divine character of the Word of God. Men are outgrowing the old ideas of the so-called Orthodox theology; and they need new phases of truth, or they will have no truth. And a New-Church has begun, in which the Lord is known in His true character, and in which His Word is open, in its inward and spiritual sense. This New-Church, the Church of the New-Jerusalem, the Lord is establishing in the hearts, understandings and lives of those who are prepared to receive its Divine principles. And though it may long struggle against evils and falses, among its people, and in its opponents, it will finally prevail, individually and collectively. And towards this grand result, our Lord's own message tells us, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

42. The Pharisee and the Publican.

The Pharisee and the Publican.

(Luke 18:9-14.) Self-Righteousness.

Summary. The repentant sinner is in better spiritual condition than the self-righteous boaster. A moral outward life may be united with an evil heart. The parable is not figurative, but practical; its lessons are not taught by allegory, but by examples. We are told that the parable is given as a rebuke to self-righteousness.

Pharisees. The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews, very strict in outward forms and ceremonies of religion; but many of them were self-righteous, despising others, and holding themselves aloof from others, as holier. They represent minds of the same character, very scrupulous in externals, but inwardly evil. The Lord's characterization of them is found, especially, in Matthew 23, where He speaks of "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites."

Publicans.

Publicans were collectors of the Roman tax, levied upon the Jews by their conquerors. These publicans, generally Jews, were held in great contempt, and regarded as apostates and traitors. In the text, the humble publican represents a humble state of mind, in which the man does not exalt himself.

Temple Prayer, Etc.

Going up to the temple, to pray, is, spiritually, speaking to the Lord, in our hearts. Prayer is the opening of our inward mind to the Lord. The Pharisee stood by himself, and prayed. He felt superior to others, and so, practically, and in act, and sometimes, even in word, he said to others, "Stand by thyself: come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." Mentally, he chose the chief seat for himself. Under the pretense of thanking the Lord, he boasted of his own supposed goodness, and he despised others.

Evils In The Heart. But the Lord teaches us that evils are in the will, or heart; and that a man may be a great sinner even while he has no opportunity to express his evils in outward acts of wrongdoing. "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful."

If a good man is forced to see that he has some advantages that many others have not, he does not exalt himself, on this account; but he exalts the Lord; and he tries to let his light so shine that men will see his good works, and be led to the Lord, by them. The Pharisee boasts of his character, and of his pious acts. He imagines that he is strictly religious: and yet, while he piously pays tithes of outward things, Jesus tells us that the Pharisees omit to pay "the weightier matters of the law judgment, mercy and faith." The Pharisee's Prayer. The character of the Pharisee's prayer is remarkable: it contains no acknowledgment of sin, and no supplication for help. He does not feel any need of repentance, or of Divine assistance. He is very self-complacent. But, while he

sees no evil in himself, he has a keen eye for the sins of others. And he seeks to exalt himself by depreciating others.

Despising Others. The noble soul believes in noble men; but the crafty man is always suspicious of the motives of others. The corrupt woman never believes in the virtue of any man. Thus, in our estimate of others, we very often reflect the quality of our own motives. The Pharisees regarded Jesus as corrupt because He associated with sinners. They had no appreciation of the quality of His love, or of His motives, in dealing with men. We comprehend the Lord as we approach Him in character.

And, if a man is a sinner, we need to pity and to help him, and not to separate ourselves from him, in contempt. Every man is capable of regeneration: and he needs aid towards this end. Perhaps, before he fell into sin, he resisted more evil tendencies than we would have resisted, if we had been as severely tempted.

Self-righteousness is one of the most malignant forms of evil, and one of the most difficult to overcome. Those who selfishly imagine themselves to be saints, and who expect to claim a higher position in heaven, will find themselves utterly unable to appreciate a heavenly condition of life, and utterly unwilling to live in heaven.

Whenever you find a man despising others, you find a man essentially evil. And, if he seems to be righteous, his righteousness is outward and superficial, And not in the heart. The good man hates evil, especially in himself; but he does not hate the sinner, nor despise him. He separates the sinner from his sin. But the external and self-exalting man does not separate the sinner from his sin; and he despises evils in others, but not in himself. The Publican.

How different the condition of the publican. Accustomed to being despised and ill-treated, he stands afar off from the inner temple, and feels unworthy to draw nearer. He takes a timid and humble position. And he will "not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven." He feels humbled by a sense of his guilt and unworthiness.

Spiritually, the publican represents a mind that is not well instructed in truth, and which feels unprepared to elevate the understanding to high views of truth; but which acknowledge its unfaithfulness to the Divine commandments. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee; but unto us confusion of faces."

Smiting His Breast. The publican "smote upon his breast," to indicate the origin of his evils, in his own heart; and his condemnation of these evils; as well as his intended opposition to them. He made no boast of any goodness, but freely acknowledged himself to be a sinner. And he offered no excuse, and attempted no justification. And he censured no one else. He simply exclaimed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" thus acknowledging his dependence upon the Lord. He abases himself, and exalts the Lord. The self-righteous Pharisee exalts himself, and does not feel his need of any further aid from the Lord. But the repentant publican feels the spirit of the prayer, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give; Thou delightest not to burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

House. Justified. And so our Lord tells us, "This man went down to his house justified, rather than the other." The house of the mind is the will. As evils begin in the will, so, if we set our will against our natural evils, and determine to seek regeneration, we shall finally be "justified," or made just, or righteous, in heart and in life. A man goes down from the temple to his house, when he comes down from his inward spirit to his natural mind, where, practically, his work is to be done. In contrast, a man's inward will is the house of God, and his natural will is the man's own house, on earth. The penitent publican, having, in his inward will, met the Lord, and acknowledged his evils, can afterwards go down into his natural mind and life, and carry an abiding sense of the Lord's mercy and truth, which shall make his conduct just; for, after a time, it shall be said that, in him, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." He will be justified in the Lord's sight, although he may not be so in his own sight; for he will carry, at the same time, an abiding sense of his own unworthiness. He will ascribe to the Lord all the good he does. Not Justified. But the Pharisee, not admitting any need of reformation, will not be justified, or made just; because he will make no effort to put away his secret evils. He will regard himself as first; and yet, really, he will be last, in the estimation of heaven. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited sepulchres which, indeed, appear beautiful outwardly, but, within, are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but, within, ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." In the beginning of our journey of regeneration, we have both the Pharisee and the publican in our own mind; both the self-righteousness and the humility. And the work of regeneration expels the former, and develops the latter.

Self-Exaltation. The parable is summed up in the practical statement of a principle: "For everyone who exalteth himself shall be abased; and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted." It is meant, of course, that he shall feel humble, and not that he shall outwardly humble himself, for the purpose of being exalted hereafter. He who exalts himself sets his own will, and understanding, and prudence, above, or equal to, the Lord's good, and truth, and providence. And, in doing this, he actually abases himself, or sinks himself into a spiritually low condition. The Lord does not put him down, as a penalty for sin, but he puts himself down, in character. He adopts a low standard of character. But he who subjects his own will and understanding to the Divine will, and to the Divine Truth, and who lives by the Lord's commandments, adopts a high spiritual standard of life; and he becomes exalted in character. Sins that we do not confess and repent of, remain with us: but the sins that we sincerely confess, and repent of, and cease to do, fall from us, as we journey away from the state of character in which they were committed.

There is no evil more vigorously condemned by the Lord than the spirit of self-exaltation. And, to show the spirit of humility, the Lord said to His self-seeking disciples, "Whosoever shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Illustration.

There is a Persian story, which illustrates the two principles of self-exaltation and humility. According to this story, "Jesus, while on earth, was once entertained in the cell of a monk of eminent reputation for sanctity. In the same city dwelt a youth, sunk in every sin... He, appearing before the cell of the monk, as smitten by the very presence of the Divine Prophet, began to

lament deeply the wickedness of his past life; and shedding abundant tears, to implore pardon and grace. The monk indignantly interrupted him, demanding how he dared to appear in his presence, and in that of God's holy prophet; assured him that, for him, it was in vain to seek forgiveness. And, in proof of how he (the monk) considered the sinner's lot was inexorably fixed for hell, he exclaimed, 'My God, grant me but one thing, that I may stand far from this man on the judgment-day.' On this Jesus spoke: 'It shall be even so; the prayer of each is granted. The sinner has sought mercy and grace, and has not sought them in vain; his sins are forgiven; his place shall be in heaven, at the last day. But this monk has prayed that he may never stand near this sinner; his prayer, too, is granted; hell shall be his place, for there this sinner shall never come.'" The Mine Help. Of himself a man is powerless to break off from evil; but repentance opens his mind to the Divine help, which the self-exalting man will not seek, What a man does from himself is not genuine good; it is tainted with self-merit. Angels acknowledge themselves incapable of any good, without the help and guidance of the Lord; but devils are unwilling to receive any heavenly good. And thus, when a man exalts himself, he practically abases himself, as an inevitable result of the laws of human life.

We can clearly see how these laws operate. As a man draws his life from the Lord, through the heavens, he must be kept in connection with the Lord. And the more full and open this connection is, the more full and perfect is the man's life. Every interruption of this connection is an obstruction of the inflow of Divine blessings. Everything in the man that looks to self, incapacitates him for receiving heavenly life, and corrupts the character of the life that comes to him. The man is simply a vessel, receptive of life from the Lord. But he is a conscious vessel, with ability to receive in its integrity, or to corrupt, the inflowing life.

Human Spheres.

Every man has his characteristic quality, or character, from his ruling-love. That quality pervades the whole man, and projects itself from the man, in all his activities. It surrounds, or encompasses him, with a sort of atmosphere, which we call his sphere. So the rose, and the noxious weed, have their characteristic spheres, by which we know them. The dog follows his master by the master's sphere, as made known to the dog's acute sense of smell. Our spheres are both spiritual and natural. Everything that approaches a man meets his sphere. When the Lord sends the very life of heaven to a man, that life cannot enter into the man, except by passing through the man's own sphere. And that sphere influences the quality of the inflowing stream, as the corrupt dead body of a beast changes the quality of the pure rain that falls into it.

Reception Of Life.

Thus, though the same quality of heavenly life flows from the Lord, to all men, yet no two men receive that life alike; each, in receiving it, changes it to his own quality. A devil, filled and encompassed with the sphere of the hells, changes the Lord's blessings into curses, by corrupting good into evil. Yet, that life, which, in the devils, becomes infernal, was heavenly when the Lord sent it forth. What the Lord gives in purity, the man absorbs into his own impurity. Hence, the Lord cannot give heaven to the devils, because they will not receive it, as heaven; the dense sphere of their own evils suffocates and corrupts all good and truth, as the noxious gases of a pit corrupt the quality of the purest atmosphere that seeks to descend into it. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you." The Lord cannot dwell in

our evils, but only in His own good and truth, received by us. The Lord says, "I dwell in the high and holy, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." But self-exaltation creates a dense sphere of selfishness and evil, which no heavenly principle, as such, can penetrate. But humility softens a man's sphere, and lets in the Divine sunlight, carrying the influences of heaven to the hungry and thirsting soul. And then the humble man realizes the fact that he does not do good, and know truth, from any power inherent in himself, but by the inflowing Divine life, momentarily sustaining him. The penitent and humble man sees the difference between his own character and the Lord's character.

Sinning Not Necessary.

We do not mean that it is better for a man to sin, so that he can repent, and be humble. It is best never to sin. And any man who recognizes the character of his own hereditary tendencies, will have abundant occasion to repent of his evil feelings, and his false thoughts, even if he resists them, and does not allow them to break out into sins of action. But a man who has sinned, and repented, and reformed, is in better spiritual condition than if he had inwardly cherished evils, and had lived in outwardly moral life, and had never seen the need of repentance. For there is no man who does not need to repent, at some time. Salvation is not by works, nor by faith alone, but by and in love, faith and good works, done in the name of the Lord.

Illustrations.

Sometimes, the Lord permits a man to fall into gross sins, because, otherwise, he will not see his evils, and will not repent. The penitent sinner is painfully conscious of his need of Divine help; and so he seeks it, and opens his heart to it. But the self-righteous man feels no need of the Lord's aid, and so he does not open himself to it.

Humility sets up, in the man's mind, a Jacob's ladder, reaching up to the heavens and to the Lord, and enabling the ministering angels, as messengers from the Lord, to come down, and to lead the man, step by step, to higher conditions. Of such men it may be said, "They go from strength to strength: every one of them appeareth before God in Zion." When a man boasts of his own goodness, and denies that he has any evils, he adopts his evils as his own, and identifies them with himself. And thus there is no way in which his evils can be separated from him. But the humble man, confessing his sins, separates himself from them, repudiates them, and hates them. Thus, the Lord can approach him, and lead him away from his confessed sins.

While the self-exalting man is boasting of his goodness, and calling his evils good, the humble man is crying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting." "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me."

External Humility. Good Works.

Evidence of a man's humility is not to be found in his mere manner, but in his life. Hypocrites assume humility, to hide their purposes. Pious externals are not, in themselves, religious: they are only the proper external expression of corresponding inward principles: and, without the inward

principles, the outward forms are dead.

But, although man's works are not good, except when done in the love and acknowledgment of the Lord, we must beware of going to the other extreme, in supposing that good works are not essential to salvation. Works alone will not save a man, but neither will faith alone: he must show his love and his faith in his good works, which are the working out of good principles. Repentance, alone, does not save a man, but it turns him away from evil, and leads to good. The publican was not justified suddenly, or by his faith, but gradually, as he lived in love, faith and obedience to the Lord.

Illustration. A man in a raging fever often feels very strong, but his strength is that of disease. And when the fever abates, the patient feels weaker; but he is in better condition, and nearer recovery, than when in the false strength of the fever. So, the man who is in the spiritual fever of self-exalting strength is in worse condition than the man whose spiritual fever has left him, and who feels weak in his helplessness.

Culture.

And, on this subject, there is need of another warning; viz., not to mistake external culture for regeneration. The most moral and elegant men may be the Worst of men. Few things can compare with the serpent, in gracefulness of form and of motion; and yet it is cold-blooded and low. It represents the life of the natural senses. The most gorgeously clad birds often have the most disagreeable voices; while birds of plainest plumage often have sweetest songs. So, merely outward culture of the senses often covers a character spiritually low and evil. Babylon, with all its vices, was the center of culture.

One especial danger of external culture is its tendency to despise others, who are without such culture. But "God looketh upon the heart." The self-exalting spirit, feeling rich in its self-love, struts through the world, in miserable pride, deeming nothing too good for it, as "fools rush in, where angels fear to tread." And yet it misses the best opportunities for spiritual life. But the humble soul, recognizing its own hereditary tendencies, and the mercy of the Lord, finds, even in the hardest circumstances, opportunity to grow in regeneration; as the seed that falls upon a barren rock, where death seems to be inevitable, yet finds some little foothold for its first roots, and then sends forth longer and stronger roots, over the sides of the huge old rock, and taps the rich soil below: and, from this source of life, it flourishes like a cedar of Lebanon, even on a spot where a lichen would scarcely find a foothold. Truly, "No good will [the Lord] withhold from them that walk uprightly." "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

43. John

John

44. The Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd.

(John 10:1-16.) The Divine Love. The Shepherd. Our Lord is the Divine Shepherd of men. The Divine Love leads us; the Divine Wisdom teaches us, and the Divine Power protects us. And this unity of Divine qualities we see in our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, the one, only God of heaven and earth; one in Person, yet seen in different aspects and manifestations, as Creator, Redeemer and Regenerator; the one Divine Shepherd over the whole human race. In the Old Testament, He is made known as Jehovah. "Jehovah is my Shepherd: I shall not want." And, in the New Testament, Jesus declares, "I am the good Shepherd." Thus in this, and in many other instances, Jesus identifies Himself with Jehovah, the one, only God. "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." The coming of Jesus Christ was a fuller manifestation to men, of the Divine Life, in its three aspects, of Love, Wisdom and Power. Through Jesus Christ, as the Divine Shepherd, men are led into the heavenly sheep-fold, under the watchful care of the Divine Providence.

Sheep. In an exact sense, sheep represent the principle of charity, or love to the neighbor. In a general sense, sheep represent all the good principles of affection, in the human mind. Personally, the Lord's sheep are those who are open to receive the Lord's love and wisdom, and ready to embody these in their lives. The Sheep-Fold, Etc. And the sheep-fold represents the Lord's Church, in heaven; and also on earth, so far as the Church on earth is sincere, and obedient to the Lord. Thus, the sheep-fold is the Lord's heavenly kingdom, including all persons who are in a heavenly condition, whether in the natural world or the spiritual world. Individually, our sheep-fold is in our own mind, when heavenly good and truth are there united in our regenerate life. In one sense, the sheep-fold is the celestial Church, in distinction from the spiritual Church, which is represented by a vineyard. The shepherd represent-, one who leads and teaches. A sincere leader and teacher is moved by a love of interior and spiritual life, and a love of helping others to develop their spiritual life. The flock are those who are led and taught. The Door.

Men are taught by truth, and led by love. But, as men must know truth, before they can love it, or obey it, so truth stands as a door to spiritual life: and the knowledge of spiritual truth is the door, or doorway, through which we enter into spiritual life. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." But a man must first learn the commandments, before he can keep them. And so, a knowledge of truth is the door through which a man is introduced to the life of truth. The Lord, as the Divine Truth, is the Divine Door of the sheep-fold. To enter into the sheep-fold, through the door, is to know the Lord; to go to Him, by means of His truth; to acknowledge Him, in His Divine character; to believe in Him; to love Him; and to obey Him. Those who, approach the Lord, in His Divine Humanity, open themselves to Him, and keep alive, in themselves, the principles of spiritual good and truth, represented by the sheep. The Oriental sheep-fold was an enclosure, walled with stone, or fenced with reeds, and having a doorway, which could be closed at night, and through which the shepherd came, in the morning, to lead out his sheep. But a thief, or a wolf, would "climb

up some other way.” The Porter. The porter, or watchman, stationed at the door of the sheep-fold, represents our rational faculty, our thinking ability, which keeps watch over the door of our mind, and tests the character of the things which seek to enter into our affections and thoughts. If we love the Lord’s good and true principles of life, and if we are trusting in the Divine Providence, the revealed truths of our Lord’s Word are as doors to our minds. And, beside these known and accepted truths, our rational faculty stands, as a porter. Whatever enters into our minds by means of the door of acknowledged truth, is a shepherd; it is something that will lead and teach us in the way to heaven.

Some Other Way. But all evil and false influences refuse to stand the test of the Divine Truth: they do not enter by the acknowledged door; but they try to “climb up some other way,” to enter into our affections and thoughts in some improper way, as, for instance, through our sensuous passions and prejudices. Every thing that seeks to come to us otherwise than through the revealed truth, i.e., through what we know to be good, true and useful, is, spiritually, a thief and a robber, seeking to injure our souls. And whatever comes to us in “some other way,” seeking to influence us through our tendencies to evil, (our pride, our anger, our contempt of others, or any other infernal passion) we can no more spiritually afford to entertain and heed, than the sheep can afford to welcome thieves, robbers and wolves, into the sheep-fold. And if we would remember this fact, we could save ourselves a great amount of struggle against the insinuating influences of the hells. Our Lord opens our inward minds, and enters into them, with His heavenly influences, by coming through the door of revealed and acknowledged truth, drawn from the Divine Word. We are, therefore, to expect Divine aid, and the supply of spiritual life, through the truths of the Lord’s Word, and not from the many worldly and infernal influences, which seek to climb up some other way, into our minds, and lives. “If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” The Shepherd And His Sheep. In Oriental lands, the relation between the shepherd and the sheep is very intimate. Generally, the shepherd is the owner of the sheep, or one of the family of the owner. Pasturage is scattered, and has to be sought. The sheep often have to go a great distance for water. Wolves and other wild beasts are numerous and fierce. Thus, the sheep are used to depending upon the shepherd.

Naming The Sheep, Etc. The shepherd names his sheep, as we name our dogs, horses and cattle. And the sheep know their names, and know the voice of their shepherd. They have confidence in their shepherd; and they come at his call, and follow him, anywhere. So, the Lord’s sheep have confidence in their Divine Shepherd. And they hear His voice; i.e., they recognize and obey His truths. “He calleth His own sheep by name.” A name is given to designate a certain person. But, originally, persons were given names according to their’ qualities, or traits of character, as is still done among our North American Indians, and other nations. Names, then, represent qualities, for which the names are given.

Calling The Sheep. The Lord, as our Shepherd, calls His own sheep by name, when, by means of His truth, He reveals to men certain qualities of spiritual life, which they need to attain and cultivate; and when He reveals to them their own states and qualities of spiritual life. The Lord, in His all-wise Providence, adapts His teaching and His leading to the exact conditions and qualities of each of His followers, at each step in the man’s life. Spiritually, He always calls each of His sheep by name; i.e., in such a way that the Divine leading is always exactly and momentarily adapted to the man’s spiritual condition, and to his needed progress.

Leading Out And Putting Forth. And thus “He leadeth them out,” from the understanding and love of good and true principles, to their practical application to daily life, And when the Lord “putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them;” i.e., He does not drive them, by compulsion, as swine have to be driven, but He leads them, as sheep are led. And He does this by His own example of the good life that He led before men. Thus, they have the Lord always before them, in His example, as well as in His teaching.

Following The Shepherd.

“And the sheep follow Him;” i.e., being in the love of the Lord, and submitting their will to His, they keep His commandments, and abide in His love. They are protected by His Divine Providence. They follow Him in practical life. They know His voice; i.e., they understand His truths. Those who love to obey the truth are brought into condition to understand the truth. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”

Illustration. When you are hungry and thirsty, you know what you want; and you recognize your food, when you see it. And you take it eagerly. No argument is necessary, to convince you of its character. So, spiritually, those “who hunger and thirst after righteousness ... shall be filled,” because they know what they want, and they recognize good and truth, when presented. They are open to heavenly principles, and immediately respond to them. They have an intuitive perception of the good quality of good, and of the truthfulness of truth: and this intuition is, to them, what instinct is to the beast, a guide to its food, and a warning against what is unsuited to its use. The heart and understanding of the Lord’s sheep respond to good and true principles, as their eyes respond to the light, and their ears to sounds. Their love of the Lord., and their trustful following of Him, keep them in the inward recognition of spiritual principles. What they know, they know not by mere argument, nor by their natural senses, but from their hearts, in the “self-evidencing reason of love.” The Lord’s spiritual sheep know the voice of a truth, because it teaches them to be like the Lord. On one occasion, when Jesus taught, “the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The scribes taught doctrines, upheld by the authority of men, and of tradition. But Jesus taught truth, by its own authority, and in its own spiritual light. And those whose eyes were prepared to see, easily saw the light of truth, in the Gospel of Christ. The Stranger. The Lord’s sheep will not follow a stranger; for, spiritually, a stranger is one who is estranged from the Lord, and who is not a lover or a follower of the Lord. Abstractly, a stranger is a false principle, which is a stranger to the Divine Truth. Those who love and follow the Lord will not be led away by false persuasions and evil influences. They will shun and reject such influences. Their intuitive repugnance to evil and falsity will warn them of the presence of infernal influences. The Representation.

It has sometimes been suggested that it was inappropriate to represent the Lord’s followers by such a timid, defenseless animal as a sheep; and that it would be more natural to use, as a representative of good men, some more powerful, self-confident beast. But such a suggestion is made in ignorance of the nature of correspondence and symbolism. The proud, powerful, self-confident, fighting beast, feeling able to take care of itself, represents our selfish, unregenerate state of mind, when we do not feel the need of any Savior. But the helplessness of the sheep, inducing him to seek a leader, fitly represents the regenerate man, who feels his own

inability to save himself, and his need of a Divine Leader. And the gentle, docile, affectionate character of the sheep truly represents the changed character of the regenerate man. The parable was spoken to the multitude, including some of the Pharisees: no wonder, then, that they did not understand it. And Jesus further taught them. He said plainly, "I am the door of the sheep." As the Divine Truth, He is the door, leading to the Divine Love, which is the shepherd, and to the sheep-fold, which is His Church, and heaven.

Thieves And Robbers.

"All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers:" not literally, as to worldly times and persons. The Lord did not condemn all previous teachers and leaders. Spiritually speaking, all that ever came before the Lord, are all who put themselves before the Lord, in importance; all who exalt themselves above the revealed truth of the Divine Word; all who feel able to know truth from their own ability, and without revelation.

Speaking abstractly, all evil and false principles put themselves before the Lord, and exalt themselves above Him. These are, spiritually, thieves, claiming truth as their own, and stealing it from the Lord. And they are robbers, claiming good as their own, and separating it from the Lord. No man can receive good and truth, as such, unless he receives them from the Lord, and as Divine things. Separated from the Lord, they lose their vitality, as an arm separated from the body.

Faith In The Lord.

Sincere faith in the Divine character of the Lord, Jesus Christ, opens the mind to spiritual light, and enables the man to become spiritually intelligent. Without such faith, a man lives in natural light, only, and does not rise to spiritual light. Hence, the acknowledgment of the Lord, Jesus Christ, as the God of heaven and earth, is, truly, the entrance through the door, into spiritual life. "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me;" i.e., no one can comprehend and approach the Divine Love, except by means of the Divine Truth, which makes known the Divine character and personality. Through the Lord, men "enter in" to interior, spiritual life, and "go out" into practical natural life, led, taught, and protected, by the Divine Shepherd, and finding heavenly pasture, in the daily duties of active life. They "enter in" to the interior understanding of the Divine character, and "go out" into application of heavenly principles to practical deeds of, daily conduct.

Giving Up Life.

Jesus, as a good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep, in the assumption and glorification of His Humanity; in the death of all that was born of Mary, and the Conjunction of the Divine Human with the Divine, itself In this, we have an example of our need to die, as to evil, that we may live, spiritually. False and evil principles, "thieves and robbers," come to men, to deprive them of all good and truth; but the Lord came, to give men more good and truth, and to save them from evil and falsity.

Hirelings. In the letter of the parable, there is a comparison between the Lord, as the good Shepherd, and the leaders of the Jews, as evil shepherds, or hirelings. "He shall feed His flock, like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young." But a hireling is one who works for the hire, and not for the good that he can do. A good man, though he is properly paid for his work, loves to be useful. The

pay is not the end in view, in his life, but only a means of doing good. So, a spiritual-minded man eats food, and properly enjoys it; but he does not live to eat, but, rather, eats that he may live, and be useful. A hireling is one who loves self and the world, and who works for selfish and worldly ends. With him, worldly gain comes first; but, with the good man, gain is the servant, not the master. The hireling does not own the sheep; i.e., he has no good principles adopted as his own principles of life, and embodied in his, life. He cares nothing for the safety of the sheep. Such a hireling is one who has some knowledge of principles, but no real interest in them. And so, when evils arise, in himself, he does not resist these evils, but allows them, like wolves, to seize and to scatter whatever beginnings of good and true principles the Lord has taught him. The Wolf. The wolf is the love of false principles, which seizes the good, and scatters the truths, from the worldly mind. Thus, the wolf is in the sinner's own heart: and when temptations arise, and evils and falses assail the mind, if the man is a hireling, who does not inwardly care for the spiritual sheep of good principles, he will not give up his selfish life, in defense of the spiritual sheep; but he will abandon the contest, and allow evil and false principles to rush in, and to destroy, whatever inclinations to good and truth the Lord had implanted in his mind.

Knowing, And Being Known. The Lord knows His sheep, as His: they love Him, and abide in Him; and He gives them eternal life. But there were others, who boasted of their intimacy with the Lord: and yet, when the judgment came, the Lord said to them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." And the Lord says, I "am known of Mine;" i.e., those who love the Lord, and follow Him in life, know Him as their Lord and Savior. They require no argument, and no dogma of human authority. They are like the Samaritans, who went out to see Jesus, at the call of the woman, but who afterwards said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Worldly men argue about Christ, and dispute about His credentials; but spiritual men see and know Him, love Him, understand Him, and follow Him into the beatitudes of spiritual life. Truth appeals to the spirit of man. External miracles compel the wonder of the senses. But miracles do not convince a man of spiritual truth. In the open soul, there is an ability to know truth, as truth, which far transcends any appeal to the senses, To the spiritual man, there is nothing more evident than truth, itself: it needs no endorsement from the outside.

Simplicity Needed. The great need of men is simplicity of spirit, a condition of humble, loving, docile heart, following the Lord in the path of life, without self-will, without feverish excitement, without selfish ambition, without craving for adventure; satisfied with the daily performance of uses, tinder the care of the Good Shepherd. As the Divine Father acknowledged the Humanity, and as the Humanity reciprocally acknowledged the Divine Father, by becoming one with Him through glorification of the Humanity; so the Lord, as the good Shepherd, acknowledge His sheep; and, in their measure and degree, His sheep acknowledge Him, and become one with Him, in the regeneration. The Other Fold. In one sense, the Lord's sheep-fold are those who are in the Church; and His other sheep, not of this fold, are the Gentiles, not yet gathered into the Church, but yet to be instructed and led. In a more exact sense, the two folds are the kingdoms of the Lord, the celestial and the spiritual, which yet form one grand heaven. The spiritual heaven was formed by the Lord, at His coming in the flesh, when a judgment cleared the intermediate world of spirits, and a spiritual heaven was formed of many who had long been waiting in the world of spirits. And thus the Lord came to gather those who were not of the celestial sheep-fold, but who could then

be formed into a spiritual heaven, under the one Shepherd, in whose sight the whole heaven is one grand sheep-fold.

Taking Up Life.

Jesus laid down His life, that He might take it, again. So, in the regeneration, we lay down our natural, selfish, worldly life, that we may take up a new, spiritual, heavenly life. "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it." And, indeed, how often it is the case, that we draw nearer to our Lord, and trust in Him more implicitly, in times of trial and sorrow, than in hours of apparent prosperity. We can almost feel His great, yet tender, arm, lifting us over the hardest places in the path. Often, with us, as with the sheep in Palestine, the greenest pasture lies upon the southern ridges of the steep and rocky hills. Strength, courage, and endurance are needed, to reach them. But the Divine Shepherd leads us according to our strength, and gives us all the strength that we will exert ourselves to use.

45. The Vine and its Branches.

The Vine and its Branches.

(John 15:1-10.) Divine And Human Life.

Summary. The Divine Love is the Life of the universe, the Father of all things. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Creation lives only by and in its connection with Him as the one, only Source of Life. The Representative Meaning. The parable presents the case of a vine planted and cared for by the husbandman. Growing trees and other plants represent the growing principles in the minds of men. The husbandman is the Father, the Divine Good, the Divine Love, the Essential Divinity, which inwardly dwelt in the Humanity of Jesus Christ. The Humanity is the Divine Truth, or Divine Wisdom. In the glorification, the Divine Humanity was united with the Father, or Essential Divinity, in the one Person of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the one, only God. "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Love is the indwelling life of truth. So, Love and Truth are two, in us, until united in regeneration. The Vine. The Lord, Jesus Christ is the "true Vine," because He is the Divine Truth, embodying and manifesting the Divine Love. He is the one God, in one Person, but known to man in the three aspects, of Love, Wisdom and Power. Only in Christianity, and especially in the New-Church, can the character of the Lord Jesus Christ be intelligently understood. He is the "true Vine," the Divine Truth, inwardly filled with the Divine Love, the Father, and one with Him. The Vineyard. The vineyard is the church, in man's mind. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." The vine in the vineyard, is the Lord's truth in the Church; i.e., in the minds of men who are in the Church. The Lord, as the personification of the Divine Truth, is the "true Vine," planted in the world, by the Divine Love. Truth is derived from Love, as a son from a father. As the husbandman plants the vine, so the Father, or Divine Love, brought forth the Divine Human, and planted it in the world, to form a Church, for the salvation of men. As the husbandman cares for the vine, so the Divine Love takes care of the Divine Humanity, the Divine Truth. "I, the Lord, do keep it. I water it, every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it, night and day." The Divine Love, through the Divine Humanity, dwells in a the truth that we know, and operates that truth. Truth, alone, has no vitality: its life is from the Divine Love, dwelling in it.

Pruning The Vine. In the vineyard, the husbandman goes about, cutting off dead branches; and trimming the living branches, to bring them into the best condition. So, in our minds, the Lord plants His vine of truth, and cares for it. He seeks to take away all the dead things of evil and falsity, and by discipline, to purge, or purify, what is good in us, that it may become even better. The Branches. As regards the Lord, Jesus Christ, in his Humanity, the branches were His human affections, derived from His natural mother. These were taken away, if dead; and purified, if good, so as more fully to contain the indwelling Divine Life. But, as to man, every one who receives the truth is a branch of the Vine. His life branches out from the one Life of the universe. He receives, life from the Lord, as a branch receives its life from the vine.

It is the Lord's presence in us that makes us branches of His Vine. The Church is called "the mystical body of the Lord." In infancy, we are held in innocence, as branches of the Vine. But, as

we mature, and assert self-will, the Lord operates to take away what is dead and evil, in us, and to lead us, through temptations, to become purer, and more fully alive, and more closely united with Him.

Separating From The Lord.

All who know truth, but do not love and practice it, separate themselves from the Lord. The branches will not bear fruit, unless, in our minds and lives, the truth so operates as to grow to charity and love. The Lord does all He can, for every man. He gives the man all the good he will receive, and takes away all dead and evil things, as far as the man is willing to resist and shun evils. And happy are we, when we do not resist our Lord's work of taking away our dead evils, and of purifying our partial good; when we lovingly and cheerfully accept the trials and discipline of life, as means of leading us out of evil, and further into good. Divine Love comes to us, in the truth: and if we favorably regard the truth, and obey it, the Lord will lead us to greater good. The Lord In Man. The Vine of truth is in each man, in such manner as the Lord can dwell in him, in the man's conscious life of intention, thought and act. Every circumstance of our life is nicely adjusted to our spiritual needs; to the pruning and purifying of our branches. The Lord's vine, implanted in our minds, becomes, in us, what we are willing to have it become. It is different, in different men; and in the same man, in different stages of his progress. Thus our growth in regeneration, is a growth in the process of pruning and purifying the vine of truth, in us. And our care of the vine of truth is our treatment of our Lord, Himself. For He, as the Divine Truth, is the Vine in us. And so we might read the text thus, "Every branch that beareth not fruit in Me:" for the genuine fruit of truth is goodness, and that goodness is the Lord's presence in us, when we abide in Him, and He abides in us.

Purging The Vine.

Every step, or stage, in our progress, is not final, but progressive; it is but a preparation for further progress. "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," greater in quantity, and better in quality. Our stages of spiritual progress are represented by the varied journey of the Israelites, from Egypt to Canaan, conquering, to-day, but to go on to greater conquests, further in the journey. While we are looking upon our trials as misfortunes, how greatly it would remove their sting, to remember that they are permitted purgings of our vine, to increase our spiritual fruitfulness. The redeemed pass through great tribulation. If we would try, one tenth as hard, to resist our evils, as we try to escape their discipline, we should soon be free from them.

Clean, Through The Word.

"Now ye are clean, through the Word which I have spoken unto you." We cannot know the Lord, except as He reveals Himself to us. He makes His holy Word the medium of life to us, by revealing to us, in it, the principles of Divine and Human life. The literal sense of the Divine Word reaches the outward life of our senses; and the inward, spiritual sense leads us to spiritual intelligence. Thus, by His Word, the Lord leads us upward and inward, elevating our thoughts, purifying our affections, and setting our conduct in order; pruning and purging our mental vine; leading us to reject, and to resist, every feeling, thought and act that is not in agreement with the spirit of the Divine Truth. Not natural water, nor natural blood, can spiritually cleanse us, but the Truth of the Lord's Word. And the secret of the symbolic meaning is this: the letter of the Word of God is

figuratively called water, and the spiritual sense is figuratively called blood. Water represents natural truth, truth as applied to the conduct. So, baptism is with water, for representing a cleansing of the outward life. But the holy supper is with the spiritual blood of the Lord, the Divine Truth: and, literally, with wine, called "the blood of the grape," to represent spiritual truth.

Abiding In The Lord.

"Abide in Me, and I in you." The Lord is the indwelling life of all things. But, for men to receive that life, they must abide in the Lord, so that His life can abide in them, as the branches of the vine must live by their connection with the vine, itself. And the quantity and quality of life, in every man, must be according to his relation to the Lord, The branch can merely use the life supplied to it by the vine. And so we bear good fruit, only in the measure and manner in which we use the life supplied to us by the Lord. And what the Lord can impart to us, depends upon the quantity and quality of our love to the Lord, and, thus, on our openness to receive what He seeks to give. What the regenerate man does, he does from the Lord. But, without the Lord, no man can do any good.

Thus, the closer and more perfect our union with the Lord, in heart and in life, the greater will be our fruitfulness, and the better the quality of our fruit. As our Lord reveals Himself in His holy Word, so, without His Word, we can do nothing that is good, because we cannot know anything of spiritual principles. There is nothing in ourselves to sustain our life. Life is supplied to us, by our Lord, moment by moment, as a stream flows from its fountain; as the sap in the branch comes from the vine; as the blood in the body circulates from the heart. The branch brings forth like the vine: so men bring forth good, like the Lord; i.e., it is genuine good, in so far as it is the Lord's life circulating in them.

Cast Out, Etc., Etc.

"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth, as a branch, and is withered." Ceasing to maintain connection with the Source of life, he loses the supply of life. He is cast out, not by the Lord, but by his own character. He casts himself out from the Vine, by refusing to abide in it.

"And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Evil men are gathered, when their own evil affections gather themselves together in the central principle of self-love. They are brought into spiritual association with those, in the spiritual world, who are like themselves, in quality. They are cast into the fires of their own fiery evil passions, the fires of their self-made hells. In these fires of unholy lusts, all heavenly things perish from them. The hells are not punishments, made by Divine wrath; for, speaking spiritually, there is no such wrath: God is Love. The hells are the inevitable consequences of man's rejection of the blessings of the Divine Love, turning good into evil. God gives every man a heart, that he may love his brother-man: but the man who turns love to hatred makes a hell in his own heart. "I have set before thee, this day, life and good, and death and evil." Life and good are in the use of what the Lord gives to men; and death and evil are in their abuse.

Asking What We Will.

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." When a man's whole life, inwardly and outwardly, in intention and in act, is formed in accordance with the Divine laws of spiritual and natural life, he abides in the Lord, as a branch in

the vine. And the stream of Divine life flows into the man, and through him, filling and blessing him. Thus, the whole power of the heavens operates in and through the man, and gives him power to do what he desires to do. In this state, the man is held in heavenly order. He wills to be, and to do, as the Lord wills. He loves to be led by the Lord. All his desires are such as come to him from the Lord. He can have all that he wills, because he wills such things, only, as are in agreement with heavenly life. He has power over evils and falses, because, in him, the heavens are present, to control the hells. He is taught from the Lord's Word, and thus, from the Lord, Himself, who is in His Word. In this man's beautiful life, the beatitudes of heaven give perfect satisfaction. Every desire flows from the Divine Love; every thought from the Divine Wisdom; every act from the Divine Power. There is nothing in heaven that he cannot have, if he desires it; and there is nothing outside of heaven that he would be willing to have. Can you imagine a more desirable condition than one in which you can have every want satisfied, freely and fully?

Securing Our Desires. And how can a man secure all that he wants? Only in one of two ways: either he must have power to conquer all opposing forces, and to acquire all that he naturally desires; or he must acknowledge some standard of right, and submit his desires to this test. Either he must be able to have all that he wants, or he must bring himself to want only what he can have. Now, it is very easy to see that no man can subdue the universe, and control its laws, and make his own will master of all things. But he can succeed in having all that he wants, by a simple change in himself. If he will abide in the Lord, and submit his self-will to the Divine will; his thoughts to the Divine truth; and his conduct to the Lord's commandments; he will come to desire nothing that he should not have. And then he may ask what he will, and it shall be done unto him, because he will ask what the Lord loves to give. A regenerate, heavenly nature will not ask anything except what is heavenly, and such things he can freely have, in all the abundance that he can use. As a branch of the vine, he has the benefit of all the life that circulates through the vine. How great, then, the wisdom of angels, in abiding in the Lord; and how great the folly of devils, in resisting the Lord's mercy.

Characteristic Desires. The Lord, in love, refrains from doing, for evil man, what they desire; for such satisfaction would only sink them deeper into misery. At each stage of a man's life, he craves what agrees with his present nature. As his nature changes, his wants change. Everything desires according to its organization. The eye longs for light, and the ear for sound. The fish seeks water, and the bird seeks the air; the herds and the flocks desire pasture, and the carnivorous beasts demand flesh and blood. Everything utters a cry for the things that feed its nature. By the same law, the devils madly cry for revenge and filth, and the angels gently pray for love and purity. But, while the devils must be restrained, in their insane follies, the angels cannot breathe a desire which is not promptly and fully gratified. "No good will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Satisfaction. And it is a glorious truth, that the way to full satisfaction of our desires is not through the subduing of all things to, our self-will, but in the submission of our self-will to the commandments of our Lord. We are in disorder, and estranged from the beneficent laws of human organization. And the universe seems to be opposed to our individual desires. But, as soon as we curb our self-will, and return to the laws of heavenly order, the whole universe turns to greet us as a friend, and lays at our feet every gift that we can desire.

Men were created for a heavenly life; and, as soon as they enter into that life, the door of a new world opens, and they find themselves just beginning truly to live. And then they may have whatever they will, for the Lord moves them to ask, as He moves the fish to ask for water, or the eye to seek the light. In fact, the Lord has already provided for men all that they can ask. See the whole universe, spiritual and natural, created for a home for men, and supplied with all things necessary to the human organization. And those who use, without abusing, the gifts of the Lord, may ask what they will, and it shall be done unto them. The only conditions are, that they shall abide in the Lord, and keep His commandments; for, without these conditions, men cannot attain a state of life in which they can receive heavenly blessings.

Bearing Fruit.

“Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.” The Father is glorified, when the Divine Love is manifested in the lives of His children. “Let your light so shine among men, that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father who is in heaven.” And where is heaven, but in the human soul. Those who truly keep the Lord’s commandments, exalt the Father, the Divine Love, in their own hearts and lives; and they bear testimony, by their example, as genuine disciples, seeking, in their own conduct, to exhibit the goodness of the Lord. No truth becomes living, in us, until we practice it; until it bears fruit. The seed, which perpetuates, is not in the blossom, but in the fruit. How often we see a beautiful truth, as a sentiment. We talk of it, and think of it. But, if we do not practice it, in our daily life, of what value is it, to us? “Every branch. . . . that beareth not fruit, He taketh away.”

Unfruitful Branches.

It is a serious truth, that we do not embody any principle in our spiritual organization, as our own, until we put it into actual practice. The things that we have been pleased with, but have not practiced, will, in the judgment, be lopped off, as dead branches, bearing no fruit for spiritual life. In The Lord’s Love.

“As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love.” As the Divinity is united with the Humanity, by love, so the Divine Human is united, by love, with all who lovingly live by the Divine Truth. The Divine Love flows into the Divine Truth, and the Divine Truth comes down to men, bearing, in its bosom, the Divine Love. As the Divine Love makes the Divine Truth to be what it is, so the Divine Truth, as a Vine, sends forth the Divine Life into all its human branches. We continue in the Lord’s love, when we continue to love the Lord; for the Lord always abides in all who are willing to receive Him.

Keeping The Commandments.

“If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” Thus, union with the Lord is practically effected by obedience to the Divine Truth, as known, as the assumed Human was united with the Divine, by fulfilling the Divine will. All human knowledge and wisdom, to be fruit-bearing, must lead the man to shun evils, as sins, and to keep the Lord’s commandments, “All religion relates to life, and the religious life is to do good.” Thus, by keeping the commandments, men become images and likenesses of the Lord. For the commandments are an expression of the Divine Life. As far as a man loves good, and does good, according to the Lord’s commandments, so far does he love the

Lord. All evil is opposed to the Lord, and to genuine human life. Keeping the Divine commandments, the Divine Love will flow into our hearts and lives, filling them with new and expanding life, branching out, more and more fully, towards the full “measure of a man, that is of an angel.”

Truth In The Life. As novitiates, we found the truth very interesting. We could talk of little else. And if it has now become an old story, then that truth is not bearing fruit in our lives, as it should do. Our branch needs pruning and purifying. We are cultivating some dead things, that do not belong on the Lord’s vine. The great question is, not how much truth do we know, in quantity; but what is the quality of our love, and of our life. If we are losing our interest in the truth, we are not abiding in the Vine, and its life is not flowing into us, and producing good fruit. Something, in us, is stopping the flow of the vine’s life.

Thus, our real interest in the truth, our work for the truth, and our willingness to put away every desire and thought that is opposed to the truth, are as mental thermometers, measuring the degree of our advance, or our backsliding, in the life of the Church. If we have kept tip our interest in the truth, it will be like a growing branch of a great vine, daily sending forth new shoots, new blossoms, new fruits. “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not: they are new every morning.”

Truths Of The New-Church. To the soul that feels their renewing influence, in the growth of a new and better life, the truths of the Church, drawn from the Word of God, never grow old and stale. Truths grow stale to those who neglect to use them. Every new step upward and inward presents the two worlds, of nature and of spirit, in new lights and phases; exhibiting, to the ever growing soul, new views of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” Truth that is loved and lived never grows old, or rusty. Use keeps the truths alive, in us, as exercise strengthens our bodily muscles. The growing vine of truth is ever becoming new, shedding old branches, and putting forth new ones, moved by the inward force of expanding love.

It is a great privilege to know the doctrines of the New Church, opening the inward meaning of the Divine Word. But our responsibility is increased by our knowledge. And it is a fearful thing to lose interest in these grand and heavenly truths. To lose interest in these truths, is to lose interest in the higher and holier life to which they point. “Create, in me, a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

If we find these grand truths less interesting to us than they have been, it will be a serious mistake to lay the fault to our numerous worldly cares, or to any other external circumstances. The more our cares, the more we need the truth, to direct us. But, we shall need to look into our own hearts, for the cause of our indifference. If we lose interest in the truths of our Lord, we lose interest in our Lord, Himself. But our Lord said, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love.”

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