

2: 21). Man cannot foil God's plan for the world, but he may render it vain for himself" (Lindsay.) This explanation of the evangelist prepares us for the charge of inconsistency which Christ now lays against them.

31. Like unto children—This is the only place in the Bible where children's games are mentioned (compare Zech. 8: 5). They seem to have been playing at "wedding" and "funeral." One group complains that, do what they will, the others "won't play right." At the wedding they won't dance and at the funeral they won't wail. So, Christ says, the Pharisees disliked the searching rebukes of John, for they did not feel that they were sinners; and they hated still more his own gracious teaching, for it set no value upon their heartless, formal ceremonies. They said that John was possessed with a devil, and that Jesus was a bad man. "The sense of the comparison is, ye are like a band of wayward children, who go on with their own game, at one time gay at another grave, and give no heed to any one else, and expect every one should conform to them. You were angry at John because he would not dance to your piping, and with me because I will not weep to your dirge. John censured your licentiousness, I your hypocrisy; you, therefore, vilify both, and 'reject the good counsel of God, who has devised a variety of means for your salvation (Luke 7: 30)." (Wordsworth.) We have piped—played on a pipe, an instrument somewhat resembling a flageolet. We have

mourned—R. V. "we wailed," after the fashion of hired mourners at a funeral.

33. Eating no bread nor drinking wine (R. V.)—living a hermit's life, and dining on locusts and wild honey. Every day was a fast day with him (Luke 18: 12). His ascetic mode of life was displeasing to the courtiers and Sadducees, and his fearless rebuke of sin offended the self-righteous. Eating and drinking—His first miracle supplied the lack of wine at a wedding feast (John 2: 2). He accepted invitations to the tables of the rich (Luke 7: 36; John 12: 2), and we never read of his fasting, or of his disciples doing so; but he derided them in not fasting (Matt. 9: 15.). A friend of publicans and sinners—(Luke 15: 2; 19: 7). It was not true that Jesus ate and drank to excess, or that he companied with bad people because he was bad himself. But it is true that Jesus made himself a friend and companion of all so that he might turn them from sin to himself. The words they spoke in scorn are his proudest title now—"The Sinner's Friend."

35. Wisdom—divine wisdom. Prov. 8 and 9; 1 Cor. 1: 23, 24. Justified of all her children—The children of wisdom are the divinely wise, the spiritually-minded, "of" whom, or "at the hands of" whom, God's plan is approved. Those who, like the pharisees and lawyers, "resist the counsel of God," show thereby that they are not God's children.

## SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

Languishing in the prison fortress of Machaerus, John the Baptist craved some new assurance from Jesus that he was indeed the Christ. He was still a prophet of the old dispensation, and looked for such a Messiah as most Jews expected. But Jesus did not seem to come up to this idea. He gave no sign of purging with his "fan" and burning up the chaff. Gloomy thoughts, arising largely from his confinement and inactivity, arose in his mind. Might he not have been mistaken? Might not Jesus only be another prophet like himself, but holier, who heralded the advent of Messiah. Surely Jesus himself would know. He would send and ask him. Accordingly he sent two of his disciples, asking him, "Art thou the Coming One, or is He yet to come?" The answer of Jesus shews that he fully understood John's state of mind. He did not upbraid him for wavering faith, nor enter into a discussion of Scripture, as he did on the way to Emmaus on the afternoon of his resurrection, nor curtly answer "I am," leaving John to rest his trembling soul upon a simple assertion, thus to try his faith still more; but he bade the messengers, "Look!" "Listen!" "Tell!" Picture to John what they saw, and let him hear the "gracious words" spoken. His own faithful heart would do the rest. And he gave him a benediction, "Blessed is he who shall find no stumbling block in me."

When the messengers had departed Christ Commended John to the people in vivid, dramatic eloquence. He spoke of no one else in such high terms. John he declared to be the greatest man that had ever lived. Yet, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he added, "Nevertheless the humblest of my followers is greater than he." In what respect is this true?

Than John there was No Greater in Character. No bending reed, yielding to every popular demand, but a sturdy oak or immovable rock, who planted himself firmly for