

which they might be the subjects, and to pay "custom to whom custom, tribute to whom tribute, honour to whom honour," are due. When, by a miraculous impression, he drove the traders from the temple, he taught that the places and the acts of worship are to be kept scrupulously free from the intrusions and distractions of secular things. The miraculous draught of fishes was designed to indicate the success of the Apostles in their work of evangelizing all nations; for he immediately subjoins the moral, "Fear not, Simon, from henceforth thou shalt catch men;" and then they forsook all and followed him, as well understanding his meaning, in order to be fully trained for this glorious ministry. Perhaps, too, by this miraculous draught of fishes, he intimated to them a truth which they at least afterwards well understood, and habitually recognised,—that their success in the ministry of the Gospel would be the sole result of the same miraculous power working in the depths of the hearts of men, which had wrought an effect in the depths of the ocean; so wondrous, too, as to be a certain demonstration, that the effect was not to be attributed to the skill of the fishermen, but to the power of God alone.

Several other instances might be given; but it must often have in particular impressed you, that the miracles of our Lord were, in a great number of instances, intended to teach,

5. THE DUTY AND NECESSITY OF FAITH; that is, a personal trust in his power and mercy. This is so important to us, that we may dwell upon it a little more at large.

As mere proofs of Christ's mission, his miracles of healing had been quite as strong, if he had not required faith, as an act of trust, from the persons who applied to him for relief, since they might have been appealed to by himself and his followers with equal force of argument, independent of the inward previous moral disposition of those who were the subjects of his healing power; and, in fact, are always so appealed to, when adduced as proofs of the claims of Christ, without any allusion to this circumstance whatever. This shows that our Lord intended, in such cases, something beyond increasing the number of those miraculous attestations which proved his mission to be from God. He taught, in fact, that something more than mere assent, however deeply founded in conviction, would be required of men in order to their salvation. The faith which his religion was to make the condition of justification and sanctification, and all other spiritual blessings, was to be a *personal trust* in his power and grace; and he singularly honoured such a faith in those who came to seek relief from him for their various bodily infirmities, manifestly in order to show how he would honour it in us whenever exercised. Mark the striking character of the instances by which this is illustrated.

A leper comes in this faith, and, worshipping him, says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and the confidence so simply but emphatically expressed met with its instant reward. "And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

A centurion sends to Christ, praying that he would come and heal his servant; but, as he was drawing near, sends other messengers, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Here was faith! He declared, in fact, his full persuasion that our Lord had as absolute a command over diseases, as he himself had over the soldiers placed under him, and that he had only to bid them come or go, and they would obey him. Hence, though Christ should remain at a distance from the diseased person, he believed that he had only to "speak the word, and his servant should be healed." This faith was not only commended by our Lord, but honoured and confirmed. He did not go to the house; but he uttered his command, and "they that were sent returned to the house, and found the servant whole that had been sick." The disease had indeed obeyed the command of Omnipotence, and had fled!

That is a beautiful and affecting instance we before referred to, and which is recorded in Mark ix. A father brings his child, sorely tormented by an evil spirit, the subject of long and terrible suffering; and to his imploring solicitation, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon us and help us," Jesus replies, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" and the poor man, in an affecting struggle between faith and doubt, cries out, "with tears," sufficiently expressive of the violence of the inward conflict, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." Even this staggering, wavering faith—the faith which, weak as it was, still struggled for the victory in an honest mind—was not rejected, and the child was healed. "O thou of little faith!" that hearest this, be thou of good courage; try the same experiment; put forth all the strength of thy faith, feeble as it may be; let it wrestle with thy unbelief; let it be exercised in its measure; and thou shalt not be disappointed of the blessing for which thou also art entreating thy Saviour.

But the most singular case is that of the Syro-Phœnician woman. First she utters her loud and plaintive cry, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." No small degree of faith, indeed, was implied in this address itself; but it was to be severely tried, and more gloriously manifested:—"But he answered her not a word." Next the disciples themselves intercede for her: "Send her away," by granting her request, "for she crieth after us;" she is exceedingly distressed and importunate. But he answered and said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Even these cold words, pronounced in her hearing, did not cast her into despair; for "she came and worshipped him;" and in one of those short bursts of desire from a full heart, which express more than many words, she exclaims, "Lord, help me!" Our Lord's next reply was still more appalling, still more out of his usual manner: "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs;" purposely using the reproachful language of his countrymen to the Gentiles, in order to put her faith to a still sharper test. But even this saying, which must have withered the strongest faith, had it not been secretly sustained by his own influence, only gives rise to an ingenious plea, suggested at once by the strongest desire and the deepest humility: "And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Her request was granted. At first sight, our Lord seems to yield to importunity; but no, it was to faith: "O woman, great is thy faith;" faith far above the ordinary measure—faith which had to triumph not only over the difficulty of the case, but over the chilling repugnance of our Lord's manner and replies—faith whose eagle eye seemed to search every feature of his countenance—which penetrated into his very heart, saw compassion rising there, fixed on that alone, urged the plea with reiterated earnestness, and carried off the blessing.

What, then, were all these instances designed to teach, but the necessity and acceptableness of faith in our case also; to excite an entire and filial confidence in all his people, in all ages, and in all their afflictions and sorrows "of mind, body, and estate?" He is Jesus still; he honours the trust which honours his faithfulness and love, and to this moment "all things are possible to him that believeth." "Trust ye then in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Lastly, we have TYPICAL MIRACLES.

I call many of "the signs which Jesus did" typical, because they appear to have been intended to represent and symbolize something higher and greater than themselves, great and illustrious as they were; and because they appear to have been a designed mode of teaching by action.

Our Lord's absolute power over the elements and laws of nature, so often and so illustriously demonstrated in many instances, indicated that the government of the natural world was placed in his hands as Mediator. He rules, he sustains, and he will destroy it.

Devils were subject to his word and name; and this showed forth a doctrine which might well spread joy through the whole earth, that he came

to establish a dominion which should first control, and finally subvert, that dark and fatal empire which Satan had established in the human heart, and over the whole world. In the anticipation of this, he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I beheld, and lo, Satan as lightning fell from heaven!" and he left an Apostle to give the moral application when he was inspired to say, "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

When he was miraculously transfigured before his disciples, he exhibited a most impressive type of that glory into which he was himself about to enter, and into which he purposed, also, to introduce his disciples, that they might behold and partake of it for ever.

When the band came to apprehend him, and he, by putting forth but for a moment a supernatural power, and speaking with but a mitigated accent of authority, arrested the arresters, so that "they all went backward and fell to the ground," he showed with what ease he can confound his adversaries; and indicated that more terrible manifestation of his majesty, when the proudest potentates of earth, with all their princes and nobles, shall cry out at his second advent, "Rocks, fall on us! and mountains, hide us!"

When, whilst in the act of dying, he rent the earth, and opened the graves, so that many of the saints came forth, he gathered the first-fruits of his people from the grave, and then exhibited a type of the general resurrection, when "the dead in Christ shall rise first." And the miracle of his own resurrection was not only the grand proof of his mission, but the type and pattern of our triumph over death and the grave. It taught that the same body shall be raised: that "this mortal shall put on immortality;" and that human nature glorified shall become a permanent inhabitant of heaven.

#### CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

THE Bible makes it our duty to instruct men; supplies the means of converting men; puts a net into our hands, which it obliges us to cast into the sea; and which, when so cast, is sure to enclose immortal souls, and draw them to Christ and Heaven. Our Saviour said to Peter, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." (ver. 10.) He did catch them by hundreds and thousands. Although this master fisherman has gone to his reward, his gospel net remains; and if hands can be found to cast it, no doubt it will "catch men" as well as it ever did before.

The Christian revelation was undoubtedly meant to be a common benefit. It is the word of our common Father, and is addressed to the entire family of man. The apostles were commanded to declare to others what had been first revealed to them, and to cause the joyful intelligence to circulate throughout the world. Ordinary ministers are appointed to study and preach that word; parents are to teach it to their children, and masters to their servants; one generation is to tell it to another; Christians are to send it to the heathen; scholars are to translate the heavenly word into all the languages of the babbling earth: this complicated process of instruction is to go on, until every nation and tribe shall hear in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. Every man, whatever may be his circumstances in life, may, in some way or other, help forward this glorious work. If we cannot do it directly, we can do it indirectly. Peter and the other fishermen of Galilee, at the time referred to in the text, were unable to preach the word themselves; as yet, they were not instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Of course, it was impossible to teach what they did not themselves understand; but they were able to give some assistance to Jesus Christ, and that assistance he readily accepted. He borrowed their boat for the occasion; and then desired them to push it a little from the land, that he might speak to the people with greater convenience and more general effect. Some persons who could not preach themselves, have lent their house to a preacher, and thus introduced the gospel into some benighted neighbourhood. Others, who have been utterly unqualified to fill a pulpit, have persuaded their ignorant neighbours to accompany them to the chapel. Parents, so deplorably ignorant that they could not instruct even their own children, have contrived to send them to a Sunday-school; while