

If a man finds his hearing becoming defective he will take any pains to have the matter remedied. I know a boy who not long ago underwent a serious operation in the hope that it might save him from deafness. When the ear of the soul is found impervious to the sound of the heavenly message, is it not time to be anxious? How will the hardness end if it is not overcome? "Lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." To remain hard is to remain unchanged, unforgiven, and therefore shut out from the kingdom of heaven, and given over to the wrath of God. Let the ground with all its hardness, the heart with all its coldness, the ear with all its deafness, be brought to Jesus now, and he will prepare a place for the reception of his own word, so that it shall bring forth fruit, "some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred-fold."

The Lesson Council.

Question 9. What is a parable?

A parable is a figurative discourse designed to convey an important truth in a more impressive or less offensive way than by direct assertion. Our Saviour constructed most of his parables into prophecies, thus concealing events from the public eye until the proper time came for their disclosure.—*J. H. Potts, D.D., Detroit, Mich.*

The answer is indicated in the word itself. It comes from a Greek word which means brought forward for comparison. It differs, however, from the ordinary comparison in being more extended, more minute. It is a prolonged comparison. Call truth a picture, the comparison gives you a profile view, a partial outline. The parable gives you a full view, a complete outline. It takes truth out of the class of abstract propositions and individualizes it. Our Saviour resorted to it often, selecting material things as the channels through which to communicate spiritual things, thus securing the attention of the common people to his teachings and enabling them to understand them. He took the diamond and exhibited its many facets all glowing with light.—*Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D., Greenville, Pa.*

A parable is a brief narrative of some probable or actual event in nature or human life, used to teach by comparison a moral or spiritual truth. Comparison is essential to a parable, and the event described must be within the limits of possibility. We have much reason to believe that the analogies upon which the New Testament parables are based were divinely ordered, and that many or all natural objects are designed to teach spiritual lessons. The Saviour said: "From the fig-tree learn her parable." Mark 13. 28, Rev. Ver.—*Prof. Charles F. Bradley, Evanston, Ill.*

10. What is the meaning of the statement in verse 12?

The meaning cannot be better unfolded than is done by St. Luke in Acts 28. 34, 27. The Jews had deliberately closed their eyes against the miracles and ministry of Jesus, and in consequence a moral obduracy had fallen upon them. To talk to them in plain language of divine mysteries was to "cast pearls before swine." Jesus therefore veiled spiritual truth in allegorical representations, that hearing they might hear and yet not understand.—*J. H. Potts, D.D.*

The answer must be found in the general principles of the divine administrations, which have for their purpose the bringing all men to the knowledge of the truth. Moral truth may be intellectually perceived while the

heart refuses to adopt it. This refusal persisted in re-acts upon the power to perceive truth until the light becomes darkness. Then judicial blindness sets in, which is a divine visitation for obstinate moral perversity, that disqualifies for understanding the truth, though it be presented in the clear form of parables. Nevertheless, the truth must be spoken, and the result, want of understanding, must not be regarded as the end aimed at by Christ, but as the result of that hardness of heart induced by wilful sin.—*A. Wheeler, D.D.*

The parables of Jesus, by veiling scriptural truths under comparisons, left the enemies of truth in the ignorance and moral darkness which they preferred. Any one who desired could have left the circle of "them that were without," and joined the followers of Jesus. Such clear passages as Ezek. 33. 11 and 2 Pet. 3. 9 prove God's desire that all men should repent and be saved. Christ's life and teaching prove the same desire.—*Prof. Charles F. Bradley.*

Cambridge Notes.

BY REV. JAMES HOPE MOULTON, M.A.

(Mark 4. 1-20—Matt. 13. 1-13, 18-23; Luke 8. 4-15.)

The setting of this great parable suggests that Jesus now used that method for the first time (comp. vers. 10 and 13). It differs from the fable (comp. Judg. 9. 8, *seq.*) in that natural possibilities are never violated; from the allegory (for example, John 15. 1-8) in that the interpretation is not interwoven with the similitude. Our three versions, especially in the exposition, differ as strikingly in form as they agree in spirit, and "critical" theories of mutual borrowing become more than usually ridiculous.

VER. 1. *Again.* As previously on the hill-side (3. 13) and in the house (3. 32). From the "boat" (comp. 3. 9). He could not only see the sower on the slope who supplied him with his text, but (as Godet notes) could watch the expressions on his auditors' faces, which were the indexes of the kinds of spiritual soil he strove to sow. VER. 2. *Hearken.* Note the vivid detail of Mark's, prefacing a parable about "hearing." VER. 3. *The sower.* No doubt we must apply Matt. 13. 37; note that Luke (8. 5) calls the seed "his." VER. 4. *Way-side.* The trodden path skirting the field. VER. 5. *Rocky.* The thin soil covering the solid rock. VER. 6. A very close parallel in James 1. 2. *Scorched.* The external effect. *Withered.* The internal. The deep-rooted corn was stimulated and matured by the same heat. VER. 7. *Thorns.* The rank growth in neglected corners, often too dense for a horse to penetrate. Here, of course, only the seeds or roots were there. Note that the "way-side" was the only soil whose unfitness was obvious to the eye of the passer-by; just so the indifferent or hostile hearer can alone be distinguished from others by his demeanor. *Grete up.* To a height which excluded air and light, and with roots which monopolized all the goodness of the soil. VER. 8. The fertility of the rich valley of Jordan makes the "hundred-fold" by no means phenomenal. Note Mark's fullness of detail in describing the vigor and fecundity of the seed. The corn can "grow up" as well as the thorns can. Implicitly is rebuked that cynical pes-imism which gives birth to modern "realistic art." VER. 9. These solemn words always called attention to thoughts which careless listeners would inevitably miss. Comp. Matt. 11. 15; 13. 43; Luke 14. 35, Rev. 2 and 3; 13. 9. VER. 10. They asked him also why he used this method (Matt. 13. 10), and he answers this first. VER. 11 *Mystery.* In New Testament usage a revealed secret.

Without. S. listened. w. Kingdom always it is. God makes. applied in. any passag. sifting pot. willing pot. willful wor. Hebrew is. was intend. Of course, derstood t. Mark. T. clearest of. It must r. kingdom. 1 Cor. 3. 9. short for "side." Sl. numerable. dissipate t. the manifi. Well might. Satan," "Book of J. Mephisto. evil for it. indifferent. point of ce. ous but s. of the. iarity? V. Mark 6. 2. sive char. Col. 2. 7. comp. Ma. only cons. belongs h. See the s. Principa. delusive. There are in Matt. 6. as Bengel. were eni. ground. T. of afflict. slow depo. have been. umph c. been good. the grace. good" (L. had) m. ing expo. 19. 16, 18. purpose: sponsibili.

First, r. word pict. work, etc. lustration. 1) Way young r. Good grow