

voice, is a live and pressing issue in the world today, it will be well for us reverently to study His Words.

We shall study—

- 1st. The duty of marriage ;
- 2nd. The nature of marriage ;
- 3rd. The purpose of marriage; and
- 4th. The proper grounds of divorce.

First, then, the duty of marriage :

The Christian Church, taken as a whole, has probably never held the true conception of marriage. Early in the Apostolic age the Apostles, influenced by the distressing persecutions of the time, and by the hope of the speedy return of the Lord, discouraged marriage for a time—"For the present emergency," wrote Paul. In addition to this, the lofty spirituality of the early believers, coupled with a wrong view of the purpose of marriage, made them feel that marriage was incompatible with the highest spiritual state. Prof. Ruschenbush describes the situation in these words—"Marriage, too, was regarded by many of the early church teachers as a lower moral condition, a relation necessarily involving physical defilement, a compromise with the fallen life of humanity, a concession to the weakness of the flesh. It was a relation not good in itself, but simply a preventive of licentiousness, needed by the weak." Thus the sentiment in favor of celibacy slowly spread, and in process of time the celibate state became invested with a superior moral sanctity which developed into a prohibition of marriage for the clergy and the official encouragement of the cloistered life for the laity, so monasteries and nunneries sprang up everywhere. Not that Christianity originated the idea of the cloistered life—it was borrowed from the heathen world.

The Reformation changed this view to a more scriptural one. "Marriage is honorable in all" became the watchword, although the duty of marriage was not emphasized. There was probably no need at that time that it should be. All that seemed to be required was that that most sacred of human relations should be recognized as holy and in harmony with the will of God.

But times have changed. Altered industrial and so-