

“Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is the truth.”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

The corresponding expression in Hebrew puts it well, “O the blessednesses of the poor in spirit.” As if the Master had said, eternal blessedness will accrue to the man, who receives my words, and acts upon them, he will be happy here, and hereafter. The state and spiritual condition of the Jewish people and church at the time of our Saviour’s coming, might justly represent the corrupt and debased estate of the world in general. The representations of the national spirit were the poles asunder from the soul-inspiring and elevating views of the Scriptures of truth. They esteemed themselves, and their nationality, as entirely righteous, and beloved of Heaven, and perfectly satisfied with their state and condition. The Master came to correct their views and all similar views, where, and however held. Luke simply says “blessed are the poor.” We have never yet seen any blessedness in physical poverty, so that the interpretation, that the great Teacher meant to say, that the physically poor were blessed, may be discarded without a word. The fact of his coming and the first to preach to the poor, indicates that poverty, whatever that means, was a misery. And so it always is.

It must sometimes have struck you, how singularly free the Master’s teaching is from the stereotyped and dogmatic forms of religious teachers, either before or after his time. What an absence there is of the usual formularies of profes-

sional expressions. No mention of baptism, no mention of the Lord’s supper, no allusion apparently, to original sin, the corruption of human nature—no bringing forward justification by faith and the many other dogmas and understood essentials of a theological system of truth. Blessed are the poor in spirit, His first grand, pregnant expression.

The simplest and most scriptural view that we have been able to form of this passage, is, that it embraces the germs of all religious teaching, and is adapted to man in every clime, and under every circumstance. That the Beatitudes, as they are called, represent the progressive stages of the divine life in man, and are, when properly understood, enforced, and acted on, calculated to make man wise unto salvation. Under this leading and guiding idea, the following illustrations are respectfully submitted for your careful consideration.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” This radical truth had been, and was entirely ignored by the Jewish Church, has been, and is largely ignored by the world, at present. They esteemed themselves as righteous, and to be the peculiar favorites of Heaven. The Master came to correct the fundamental notions both of Jew and Gentile, thence in his first utterance, he says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

The uniform testimony of Holy Scripture is, that man has gone astray. From Genesis to Revelation, this is the invariable testimony. We can readily conclude that this was the state of the Jewish people we are a little more averse to consider it our own. His teaching cor-