

# SERMON.

MATTHEW IX. 3.—“This man blasphemeth.”

THIS was spoken by the Scribes with reference to the action of Jesus, in the case of the palsied man who was let down through the roof on a mattress and laid at his feet. The cures of the Great Physician were not skin deep. He probed his patients with keen lancet. He went to the root of the matter. Knowing the close connexion between sickness and sin, aware perhaps, too, that this sufferer's trouble was the result of sinful indulgence in some form,—Christ does for him exceedingly abundantly, above what he had asked or thought—He bestows the moral before the physical cure. “He said to the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” The Scribes, the recognized writers and expounders of the Levitical Law, who ranked among the sharpest critics of Christ, now appear for the first time, finding fault with him for presuming to grant absolution to this poor man. With all their errors, they were orthodox enough to know that the pardoning power was Divine, and that it was blasphemy for any mere man to assume it. Jesus stood no higher in their esteem. From their standpoint, therefore, the judgment pronounced by them, in my text, was natural and necessary. “They said within themselves”—whispering it to one another in an undertone—‘*This man blasphemeth.*’” The Evangelist, Mark, in his version of the scene, goes more into detail, giving us the substance of their whisperings. “There were certain of the Scribes, sitting there and reasoning in their hearts—‘Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?’” Jesus endorses the correctness of their inference. He thoroughly coincides with the view that none can forgive sins but God only,—and proceeds to perform the cure on the body, to show that he had a right to heal the malady of the soul.

The miracle so readily wrought in his own name, and without any reference to a higher power, was designed to prove that though found in fashion as a man, he thought it “no robbery,” no usurpation of what did not rightfully belong to him, to be equal with God.

It was the habit of Christ to appeal to His miracles in support of the Divinity of His Person and Mission. Thus in that remarkable scene in John x., when His enemies took up stones to stone Him