

ADDRESSES ON SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS—I.

SIMON PETER.

(John xxi ; 1 Peter ii. 25.)

The subject-matter of our chapter we have in the last verse read : "Ye were as sheep *going astray* ; but are now *returned* unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." We shall consider, first, what it is for the beloved people of God to *stray* ; next, what *causes* us to stray ; then, how *far* we may go astray ; further, what is *needed* to bring us back from straying ; and, finally, what *lessons* we are to learn from straying. In John xxi. 14 we read, "This is now the *third* time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead." I think we may assume that if the disciples long ago needed Jesus to come three times to set their hearts fully at rest, that so it is now. The Lord Jesus, after redemption had been wrought out—after the whole question of sin had been settled on the cross—came thrice to *establish* the hearts of His beloved people in the knowledge of what He had done for them. His two previous appearances to the disciples after His resurrection are recorded in John xx., the first in the nineteenth verse, and the second in the twenty-sixth and following verses. First of all, after the Saviour had died for us on the cross, He comes Himself to announce the *fruits* for *Him* and for *us* of that wonderful fact of redemption. He does not leave us to infer what belongs to us. He wants our hearts to know what *God* sees in it, and us to see it with Him. First of all, He announces Himself to the weeping Mary ; her heart of love was rewarded well : she got the first sight of the risen Saviour—the first declaration of what *Christianity* really is, because her heart loved Him most. He said to her, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God." John xx. 17. What is that but taking them by the hand and leading them to the ground on which He stood in resurrection ? Where His holy feet stood, where the new song was first in His mouth, as risen from the dead, *there* He brings all His beloved people. The disciples were then shut up in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, their hearts sad and despondent ; searching the sepulchre they could find only His grave-clothes. How many disciples are occupied at that business still ! Jesus stands in their midst and shows them, in His wounded hands and feet, and pierced side, what it