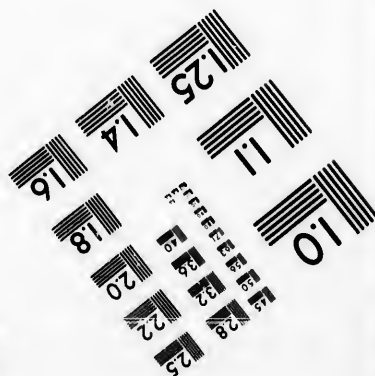
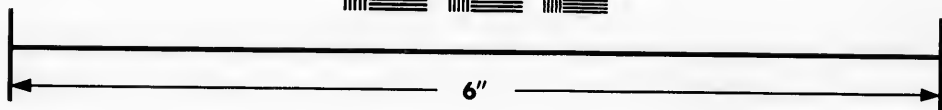
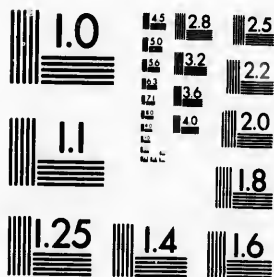


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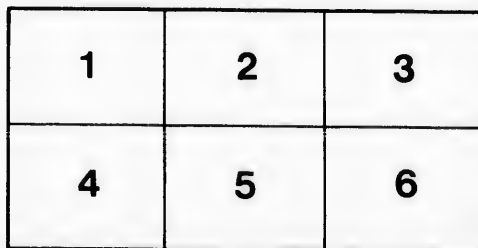
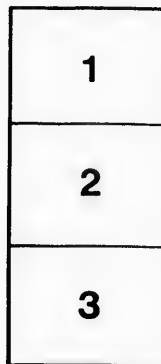
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Certain Events
IN
Our Saviour's Life.



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"When the fulness of the time was come,
I sent forth My Son."



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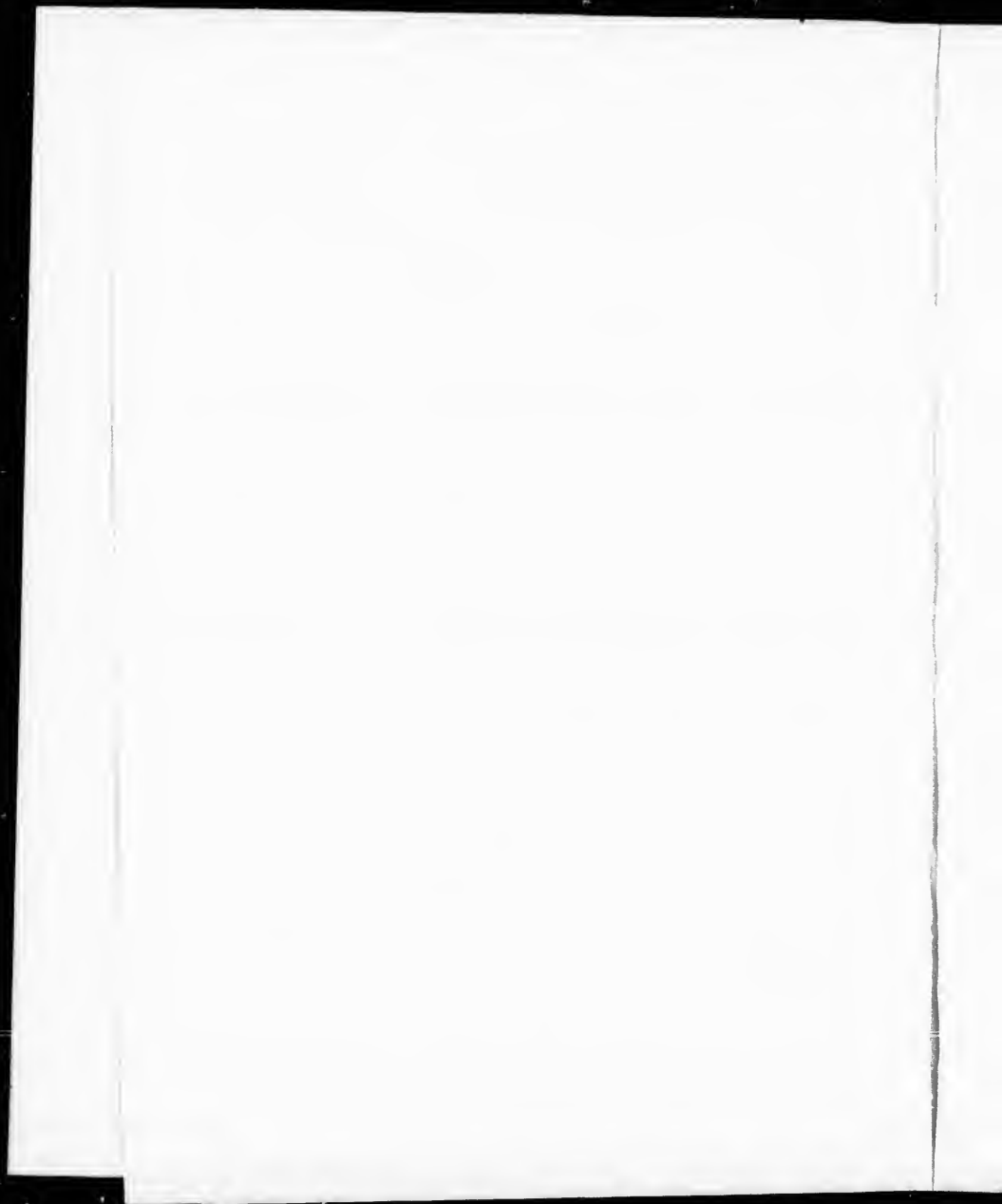
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With his Mother's Love

W. Moore

June 20/92.



A Contemplation of Certain Events
IN
Our Saviour's Life.

SIX SERMONS

DELIVERED BY

THE RIGHT REV. J. W. WILLIAMS, D.D.,

Late Lord Bishop of Quebec,

IN

S. Matthew's Church, Quebec,

ON THE

FRIDAYS IN LENT, 1892.

Montreal :

PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL & SON.

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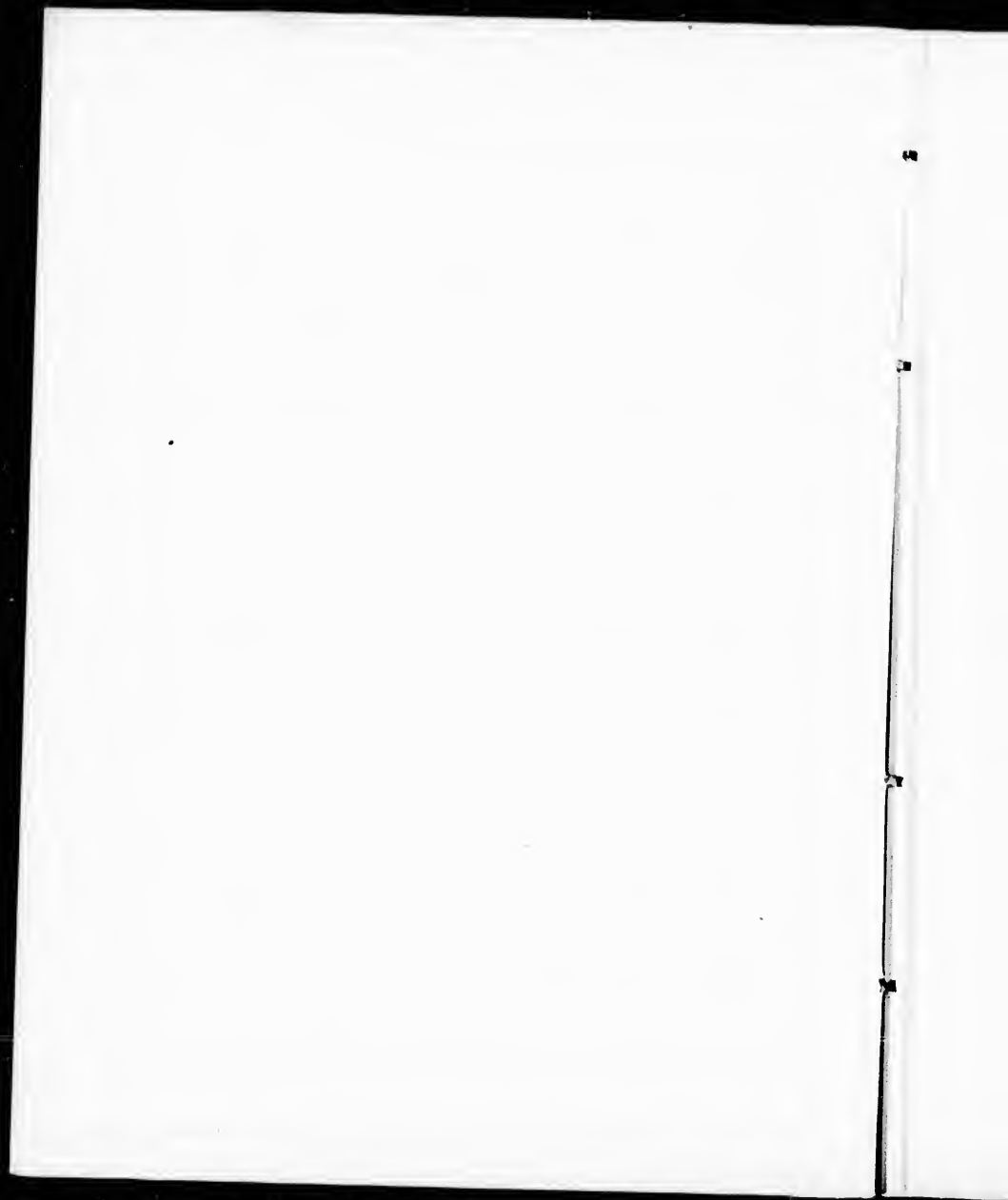
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PREFACE.

THE SIX SERMONS, by the Right Rev. J. W. WILLIAMS, D.D., late Bishop of Quebec, which form this Volume, have been published, not because they are considered to represent the best work, and most original thought of the author, as a Theologian, and Sermon Writer, but because a special interest attaches to them, as having been the last Course of Sermons written and preached by him.

The Sermons were delivered in St. Matthew's Church, Quebec, at Evensong, on the Fridays in Lent; the last Sermon of the series, entitled "THE END," on the Friday in Passion Week, in the year 1892. It was then noticed that he was suffering from a bad cold. On the following

Friday, Good Friday, the Bishop took to his bed. On Easter Eve acute inflammation of the lungs set in, and on the following Wednesday, within the octave of the glorious Easter Festival, with its blessed assurance of Death conquered, and the Resurrection to Eternal Life, he passed away.

This Volume is published at the request of Mrs. WILLIAMS, the widow of the late Bishop, in order that, sent to each of the Clergy of the Diocese of Quebec, it may serve as a memento of their late beloved father-in-God, their devoted attachment to whom, during his life-time, they so frequently manifested.

L. W.

QUEBEC, Whitsuntide, 1892.

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A Contemplation of Certain Events in Our Saviour's Life.

Sermon I.

Introduction. The Fulness of Time.

GALATIANS IV. 4.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son."

I PROPOSE, on the Friday evenings of this Lent, to put before you some thoughts about the earthly life of our Lord.

And the first of these thoughts—that which arrests our attention as soon as we begin to think about it—is this one concerning the "fulness of time." Wherein lay the fulness of the time when Jesus Christ came into the world?

Wherein lay the fulness of the time?! Well it lay:
(1) In the worn-outness of the Religions of the world.
(2) In the consolidation of the Roman Empire. (3)
In the diffusion of the Greek language. (4) In the
dispersion of the Jews over all the world. (5) In

the expectation of the Messiah's coming. These may not be all ; but these are some of the things that went to make the fulness of time.

(1) The time was ripe for the Saviour's coming, because the Religions of the world were worn out ; the false religions were seen through ; and the religion of the Jews had accomplished its purpose.

The false religions were seen through. It seems that a sense of the mystery of the world in which they live, will always engender in mankind the notion of a Being, or Beings, other than man, who made it what it is. Now this notion is founded upon a sense of power, and has nothing to do with goodness.

The natural notion that the heathen have of their gods is that they are beings to be feared and propitiated ; that is all.

And these gods they identify with the things they see and feel ; and they worship, some, the sun and moon ; some, the stocks and stones ; and some, the creatures of their own imaginations. Their gods are many, and they are not only *unmoral* ; they are, in many instances, *immoral*. This, however, does not hinder the worship

of them. They are worshipped not from love of, or reverence for, their goodness, but in awe of their power to hurt. But, in thoughtful minds, even amongst Pagan people, as reason developed, and morality matured, there came a revolt against such gods as these, centuries before the advent of Christ.

Reason had proclaimed among the thinkers of Greece that God must be one; and Conscience had demanded that the God it should revere must be good. And so it came about, that in the educated among them, Religion, at the time of Christ's coming, was an exploded thing. Politicians might use it as a superstition, convenient for keeping the ignorant in order; but by men serious and truth-loving it was derided for its folly, and for its immorality, detested.

The Religion of the Jews, indeed, had not in it any such seeds of decay; that Religion was no superstition of natural growth; it was a Revelation from Heaven; its fundamental ideas from the beginning were utterly and radically different from those which give rise in the natural man to such religion as he invents for himself; these fundamental ideas of the Revealed Religion were

(1) God is one ; and that (2) God is Holy. In such a religion there was no room for contrariety between religion and conscience—between religion and reason.

Men's notions of what was holy, and what was in accord with reason, might, in early times, have been crude and imperfect ; but, as their moral convictions became purified, this higher morality took naturally its proper place in such a religion. Such a religion had nothing in it incompatible with development of conscience. God is holy ! it always proclaimed that ; it readily took on the higher thoughts of a more enlightened conscience, as to what holiness is, concerning the holiness of God, and the holiness, the morality, incumbent upon men.

And in respect of the belief in many gods, discredited now by the advance of thought, religion had always told the Israelite what the world only slowly attained to see. Lapses there were, no doubt, in the history of the Jews into Idolatry, and into Immorality. But this only proves that the standard, both of worship and morality, was always there, since it was always appealed to.

The prophet's voice was always raised in appeal against the wickedness of men's vices, and the enormity of their idolatrous worship.

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and
“what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly,
“and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy
“God.”

There will never be found any inconsistency between
that and the highest morality, and the purest reason
that man may arrive at.

No! the Jewish religion was not doomed like the
Pagan religions to decay, because it could not bear the
light of Truth ; but its work was done ; it was a school-
master to bring men to Christ ; and the Lesson had
now been taught. The convictions of the unity of
God, and the holiness of God, and of the immortality
of the soul, had been inured into men's minds ; and
the expectations of a great deliverer had been raised
and maintained.

The Religion of the Jews had done its work ; there
was nothing more for it to do ; and, if there had been,
it was not able to do it, for it was now in its dotage.
True, the Temple yet stood in Jerusalem, the most
magnificent fane ever reared by human hands.

“In the streets of Jerusalem,” writes one, himself a

Master of Israel, who in our day and generation passed from Judaism into, and was, for many years, a man of light and leading in, the Christian Church. "In the streets of Jerusalem, men from the most distant countries met, speaking every variety of language and dialect. Jews and Greeks, Roman soldiers and Galilean peasants, Pharisees, Sadducees and white-robed Essenes, busy merchants, and students of abstruse theology, mingled, a motley crowd, in the narrow streets of the city of palaces; but over all, the Temple, rising above the city, seemed to fling its shadow, and its glory.

"Each morning the three-fold blast of the Priests' trumpets wakened the city to prayer; each evening the same blasts closed the working-day as with sounds from heaven.

"Turn where you might, everywhere the holy buildings were in view, now the smoke of sacrifices curling over the courts, or again with solemn stillness resting upon the sacred halls."* True the Temple still stood, and still its spacious courts were crowded—especially at the great feasts, which zealous Jews came from

* Edersheim,

all parts to attend, in such numbers, that the historian (himself a Jew of the next generation) computes them at no less than 2,000,000—with eager throngs of worshippers.

But the *soul* of worship, if not departed, was departing from the seemingly still stalwart Body at the Temple worship. Faith was giving way to form; the tillers of mint, anise, and cummin—they, who neglected the weightier matters of the Law—were in the ascendant. The work of the Jewish religion was done.

That was one element in the fulness of the time.

(2) Another was the recently consummated consolidation of the then civilized world into the Roman Empire.

The effect of this was to give a free intercourse and communication between the people of all countries. Wherever they went the missionaries of the Gospel found unforbidden access, and all the facilities for travel afforded by unrestricted commerce, and by the well constructed, and well kept military roads, which radiated in all directions from Rome. And wherever they went,

they were under the protection of the long, strong arm of the Roman Law. Did the exasperated Jews at Corinth endeavor to set the authorities against Paul for preaching the Gospel? Gallio drove them from the judgment seat. He would punish crime, and enforce the Law, as became a magistrate in high place, but in religious disputes he would not interfere.

Is Paul in danger to be torn in pieces by the mob at Ephesus?

The town clerk allays the tumult by an appeal to the Majesty of the Law.

A free passage for the Gospel by means of the consolidation of the Roman Empire: that was an element in the ripeness of time, when God sent forth His Son.

(3) Another was the wide diffusion, and universal use of the Greek language.

Why is it that the New Testament was written in Greek?

Because that language, in that particular form of it, was everywhere known and used. It was not only the repository of learning and of thought, to which men of refinement went for instruction, and for culture: it was

the language of the market and the street, in which men of diverse nationalities, and strange tongues congregated from all the cities of the Empire, conversed together, and transacted their business.

And how came the Greek language to be so widely diffused for the transaction of the common affairs of life ?

It came when, through the Providence of God in which "all things work together for good to them that love God—to them who are called according to His purpose." It came when, in the Providence of God, Alexander the Great was permitted to overrun, in his conquests, all Greece, and Egypt, and Asia as far as India, leaving kingdoms, and colonies behind him when he died ; who naturalized the speech over all that space ; and it was in Alexandria, a city which he founded, which still stands, and still bears his name, that the Greek Translation of the Scriptures was made for the use of the Jews resident there ; and not for their use only ; so familiar were the Jews all over the world with this Translation, that a large part of the quotations from the Holy Scriptures in the New Testament are taken from it.

These, then, are some of the things which go to make up the fulness of time spoken of in the text.

The fact that the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, was drawing to its end, that its work was done. And the fact that there was an open road through the world-wide Empire for the Evangelists to traverse, that in every city they might set up the Kingdom of God—the Christian religion—the Church of Christ. And the fact that for the facilitating of this establishment of Christianity, in Rome, in Egypt, in Asia, wherever they went, the missionaries would find, suitable to their purpose, a common language familiar to all.

(4) Another thing there was, too, that contributed to the ripeness of the time; and that was the dispersion of the Jews. A great historian and geographer of the time tells us that there was hardly a city in the civilized world, but the Jews were there thriving and prospering, and you see from the Acts of the Apostles that everywhere, or almost everywhere, the Apostles found a colony of Jews with their Synagogue. The Synagogue was at this time the most spiritual of Religious influences among the Jews, and to this Synagogue the

Apostles always went ; and in it they began to unfold their message, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Thus the Dispersion of the Jews gave centres everywhere for the propagation of the Faith.

(5) But there was another thing that went to make the time ripe for the Redeemer ; and that was the eager expectation of His coming.

From amid the suffering, and humiliation of subjugated peoples, there always goes up the cry of the oppressed for deliverance ; and the wish that is father to the thought soon engenders the belief that the Deliverer will come.

But the Jews had better foundation for these hopes than the creative influence of imagination brooding upon its miseries ; through the entire tissue of their nation's history ran the golden thread of prophecy predicting the Advent of their Messiah ; and now the feeling was abroad that His approach was near ; and the feeling was intense.

The whole people throbbed with the excitement of the anticipation. Their Messiah when He came was not only to set His people free from the yoke of the for-

eigner, He was to be a great King sitting upon the Throne of David with subject nations at His feet.

They did not understand, indeed—they could not see—the *suffering* side of the Saviour's career. Their expected Messiah was to live on, in joy and splendour, forever; but it would be a mistake to suppose that they ignored altogether the Spiritual side of His character and His Kingdom.

There were men like Symeon "waiting for the consolation of Israel," "just men and devout"—waiting in the silence of a holy life for the "Salvation which God was preparing" before the face of all people; men looking anxiously out for the Light, which was to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people Israel. They looked, as we learn from the still extant literature of the period, which, though no part of Scripture, preserves the aspirations and expectations of the time; they looked for a Deliverer who was "The Son of God," "whose name was named before the sun was made," who existed "aforetime in the presence of God," who was called emphatically "the Son of Man." These more spiritual aspects of the expected Messiah fed the

hopes of the pious ; but the whole people seethed with the excitement of expectation. They thronged the Temple courts, vainly asking of their doctors and teachers *when* the Messiah was to appear. In their enthusiasm they followed false lights with alacrity ; and many perished at the call of, and in their fanatic devotion to the cause of imposters, who promised the deliverance they looked for. And this general expectation of the Messiah was one of the signs—the crowning sign—that the fulness of time was come. And *then*, “when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son !”

Of that I shall have something to say to you on Friday next.

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Sermon II.

The Birth and Youth of Our Saviour.

GALATIANS IV. 4.

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

ON Friday last I made some observations upon that phrase—the fullness of the time.

I propose now to consider the rest of the verse, and to dwell for a while upon the thoughts suggested by the statement that God sent forth His Son, and that He was made of a woman, and that He was made under the Law.

The man Jesus was not born as other men was born. He was made of a woman. To one coming from Jerusalem, as travellers tell us, there appears, discerned from the last heights of Samaria, across the plain of Jezreel, far up on the hills of Galilee, lying like a white point, the little Village of Nazareth; the name signifies a flower, or a branch. Quietness, and peace rest upon the softly undulating hills. And there,

in one of those quiet homes lived the young girl, who was to receive by Angeis' ministration God's announcement of her high destiny.

The Angel came to her, and he said: "Hail! highly favoured. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." She was troubled, she knew not what this could mean; and again the Angel said: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of His Father David; and He shall reign over Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

In her surprise, and simplicity the maiden asks: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

The Angel replied: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore shall that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee be called the Son of God."

Even in the awe, and the joy, of that stupendous

revelation, the submissive piety, and maiden modesty of the Blessed Virgin marks her demeanour, and Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word."

In the next scene in which the Gospel story presents her, the joy of her high destiny breaks out into exultant utterance. The Angel had told her that her cousin Elizabeth, much older than herself, and hitherto childless, was about to be a mother; and she went to the hill country of Judæa to visit her. There is communication of thought between kindred spirits, which needs not, stays not, the slow communications of speech.

No sooner did the cousins meet, than Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, cried with a loud voice: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me." And Mary answers back: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me

“blessed. For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His name.”

In due time she was married to Joseph, to whom she had been before all this time betrothed. Joseph was informed by Divine communications concerning the holy mystery of his bride's conception.

The scene is now transferred to Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is a fertile spot high up in the hill country of Judæa, about six miles to the south of Jerusalem.

Augustus, then master of the Roman world, kept, as we know, a very careful account of all the resources, in men, and means, of his great Empire. And he had now ordered that there should be a general census of the population.

Joseph went with Mary, his wife, to be enrolled at Bethlehem, the city of his fathers. It is not surprising that there was no room for them in the Inn; the same cause that brought Joseph to Bethlehem would bring others too. The Eastern Inn is a large square, with a cloister, or covered space on all sides, slightly raised from the ground; on which elevation the guests disposed themselves; whilst the cattle occupied the centre

of the square. Usually, too, there were (if the nature of the country admitted) caverns, or grottoes in the hillsides, which were used for the housing of cattle.

And in one of these, it would seem, Jesus was born. And at His birth was heard a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

And Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Upon the appearance of the wise men from the East, and the slaughter of the babes, I shall not now enlarge: nor upon the flight of Joseph with the Holy Child and his Mother into Egypt.

In about a year, as it would seem, they returned, and resumed their former life at Nazareth. And there it was that Jesus grew up. And what was the home in which he grew up? It was a Jewish home, and a pious home. The pious customs might degenerate into formalities in some homes, but not in that of Joseph and Mary; that was a pious home. And what was it like?

"Every thing," says one who knew well, "every

“ thing in the Jewish home was quite peculiar. At the
“ outset the rite of circumcision separated the Jew
“ from the nations around, and dedicated him to God.
“ Private prayer, morning and evening, hallowed daily
“ life, and family religion pervaded the home. Be-
“ fore every meal they washed, and prayed: after it
“ they gave thanks. Besides, there were what may
“ be designated as specially family feasts. The return
“ of the Sabbath sanctified the week of labour. It
“ was to be welcomed as a king, or with songs as a
“ bridegroom; and each household observed it as a
“ season of sacred rest, and joy.”

“ As the head of the house returned on the eve of the
“ Sabbath from the Synagogue to his home, he found it
“ festively adorned, the Sabbath lamp brightly burning,
“ and the table spread with the richest each household
“ could afford. First he blessed each child with the
“ blessing of Israel. And next evening, when the
“ Sabbath light faded out, he made solemn separation
“ between the hallowed day and the working week;
“ and so commenced his labour once more in the
“ name of the Lord.”

Such was the home in which Jesus grew up. And in the home was the education and upbringing of the Jew to an extent not known elsewhere. True, there were schools of instruction attached to the Synagogues, but every master of a household was bound (1) to teach his son the Law of God, and (2) to teach him a trade, in which to learn and labour truly to get his own living.

To teach him a trade. Amongst no other people was there the same respect for the dignity of labour. By the Greeks and Romans mechanical toil was held in contempt as a thing fit only for slaves. But it was quite otherwise with the Jews; every father, with them, was bound to teach a son a trade.

And of their most learned Rabbies one was a wood cutter, another a carpenter, while Paul, the accomplished scholar, the rising hope of the most influential men of his day, could, and did, earn his living as a tent maker.

Joseph was a carpenter; and Jesus, as custom and convenience ruled, followed the same trade. In the workshop of Joseph, His youth and rising manhood were passed. In Joseph's home, He was brought up in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord. "As soon as the
"child had any knowledge, the private and the united
"prayer of the family, and the domestic rites—whether
"of the weekly Sabbath, or of festive seasons—would
"indelibly impress themselves on his mind."
"There was the feast of the Dedication, with its
"illumination of each house. When the first evening
"came one candle would be lit for each member of
"the household, the number increasing each night,
"till on the eighth it was eight times that of the first."
"Then there was Purim, the feast of Esther, with the
"good cheer and boisterous merriment it brought."
"The feast of Tabernacles, when the very youngest
"of the family had to live out in the booth."
"And chiefest of all, the feast of the Passover week.
"There was about the Paschal Supper with its symbols
"and services, that which appealed to every feeling,
"even had not the Law expressly enjoined that full
"instruction should be given as to every rite and part
"of the service. At a certain part of the service it was
"expressly ordained, that the youngest at the Paschal
"table should rise, and formally ask what was the

“ meaning of all this service, and how it was distinguished from others.”

“ To which the father was to reply by relating, in language suited to the child's capacity, the whole national history of Israel from the calling of Abraham down to the deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the Law.”

“ And the more fully,” it is added. “ he explains it, all the better.”

As the child's capacity developed, he was taught to read the Scriptures. In some degree this would be done at the school attached to the Synagogue. But the best part of it was done in the home. It was a duty incumbent on the father ; but the mother's influence is never to be forgotten. It was from his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, that Timothy got in childhood his familiarity with the Scriptures. And what Lois and Eunice were in motherly love, and instructive piety to Timothy, that, we may be sure, Mary was to the child Jesus.

These were the surroundings of the child Jesus at Nazareth.

When He was 12 years old, happened that remarkable incident, recorded by St. Luke, of His being lost, on the return of Joseph and Mary from their annual journey to Jerusalem, and found sitting amidst the doctors in the Temple.

This is supposed by some to have been the occasion of His being formally admitted to the full status of a member of the Jewish Church, and the first time He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem; but there is some doubt about both of these things.

It was quite in order that He should be there, answering and questioning the doctors, who attended on such occasions for the special purpose of giving these instructions.

The only thing that surprised the bystanders was the wisdom of His answers. Joseph, indeed, and Mary were troubled at the losing of Him, and his answer to His mother's gentle reproof (taken in conjunction with what the Evangelist records at the close of the incident) opens up a very large, and a very difficult, question: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business!"

That seems as though the consciousness of His Divine paternity, and of His mission for the Redemption of mankind, was now beginning to dawn upon Him. But whether that be so or no, the difficult question of which I spoke—a question which we cannot help asking ourselves, but which we cannot answer with any precision, and had better not answer with rashness of dogmatism—is opened by what follows: “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them, but His Mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”

“And Jesus increased in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man.”

How could He, who was God incarnate, increase in wisdom?

Later on, we shall see that sometimes, He knows what is in man, and beyond man, with the unerring insight of a Divine intuition. And sometimes, He Himself declares that there are things which the Son knows not. The Godhead in Him was veiled from human eyes, but how far was it veiled from Himself? how far was it held in abeyance by His

voluntary submission to the conditions of human life? Men must ask—they cannot help asking themselves—these questions; their mistake is that they insist upon answering them.

It were their wisdom to follow the Holy Mother's example—to keep them, and ponder them in their hearts.

Anyhow, His Father's business, which Jesus was to be about, was, from this time, before his mind. And what was that business?

Well, for twenty years or thereabouts, it was simply to wait; to live on, working in Joseph's shop—reading the Scriptures, from time to time, in the worship of the Synagogue—"as His custom was"—drinking in there, in the seclusion of Nazareth, all those natural sights, which filled, in after years, His talk with instruction and delight,—the lilies of the field, and how they grow—the fields whitening to the harvest—the sheep wandering away and lost—the foxes with their holes—the eagles gathering to the carcass—the varied significance of morning's, and of evening's glow. For twenty years His business was to wait. Then the

Father's purpose, and His own purpose, was matured, and that purpose was—the Salvation of Mankind.

How did He purpose to save men? *By uniting them to God.* Making them, as St. Peter expresses it, "Partakers of the Divine nature."

And how did He purpose to unite men to God? By uniting them to Himself—Immanuel—God Incarnate!

And how did He purpose to unite men to Himself? By forming them into a Kingdom—a Society—a Church—a Spiritual Body. Of which He is the head.

And how does He form them into that Society? By Himself laying down the great Principles, and Constitutions of the Spiritual Kingdom. And by establishing its fundamental institutions in the two Sacraments. By calling and commissioning the twelve Apostles to carry out His design. And by sending the Holy Ghost—the Giver of Life—to make men, one by one, subjects of the Kingdom, and members of the Body!

But, before all this, something else is needed. The world is enslaved to sin, and, before the slave can be saved, he must be redeemed—bought off from that state of slavery to sin.

And how does Jesus purpose to Redeem mankind from their subjection to sin and its consequences?

He will redeem the race, by Himself bearing the penalty of sin, and by obliterating its effects. His holy life is human life regenerated, and into the regenerated life Christians are incorporated—grafted by God, the Holy Ghost. That was the Father's business which it behoved Him to be about.

How He set about it we shall see on Friday next.

Sermon III.

The Beginning of Our Saviour's Public Life.

ST. LUKE III. 23.

"And Jesus Himself when He began (to teach) was about thirty years of age."

THAT is the rendering of the revised version ; and it is no doubt the proper meaning.

The rendering of the authorized version : "Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age," has no justification in the rules and usages of the language from which the translation is made. What St. Luke says is just this : "when Jesus began, He was about thirty years of age." Began what? Something must be supplied to make the sense complete ; and it seems pretty plain what that something must be, viz., when He began His ministry, when He began to teach. But, before I go on to speak of His ministry, it will be convenient to say something about the great prophet, who came to prepare His way.

John the Baptist was the son of a priest, and in the ordinary course he would have been a priest himself;

but his predestined life lay out of the ordinary course. He was to be no priest, but a prophet; he was called Elijah, and, like Elijah, he lived a life removed from the haunts of men.

“He was in the deserts until the day of his shewing
“unto Israel.”

In the deserts. The wilderness of Judæa stretches some 60 miles from the shores of the Dead Sea to the confines of Samaria, and is 4 or 5 miles wide, having the hills of Judah on one side and the valley of the Jordan on the other. A bare, silent solitude without a tree or a blade of grass under the ever-blazing sun.

A long white line winds across towards the Mount of Olives; this is the high road from Jericho to Jerusalem. And here it was that the prophet, clothed in his coarse robe of camel's hair, and feeding upon locusts and wild honey, ripened for his work. He was not bred in the formalities, and bigotries, and puerilities of the Pharisees. No! nor did even the solemn services of the Temple form his religious character. In the deserts he was alone with God, and in that spiritual communion he learnt all that the types, and services, and regu-

lations, and ceremonies of the Law could teach; and far more than in the case of most men it did teach; he sounded the depths of the mystery of sin.

To prepare for the Messiah, men must, the Pharisees taught, observe the Law in all its strictness. They must do more than that, the prophet felt, and the prophet knew. After they have done all that, they are still but unprofitable servants. They must repent—they must away with all conceit of self-righteousness—they must own themselves to be sinners—they must confess their sins.

In the wilderness, John announced that the long expected, vainly looked for Kingdom of God was at hand—that repentance deep, and publicly owned, was the true, and only, preparation for it.

I have said that a great and much frequented road passed across the desert where John resided. There, as they passed, the numerous caravans, and companies of travellers from all parts would see the weird figure of the prophet, and hear his burning words. And what they saw, and what they heard, they would tell again; and so it came to pass that there went out to him,

“Jerusalem and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan,” “and were baptized of him in Jordan, “confessing their sins.”

He taught them the necessity of repentance. Confession of their sins was a pledge of the sincerity of their repentance.

Baptism was the public symbol and expression of repentance.

For his Baptism, John came down to Bethabara, or Bethany, about 3 miles above the northernmost part of the Dead Sea, where was a ford of the Jordan, up to which led another great road from the south. The fame of the prophet was now spread over all the country, and they came, of all classes, orders, and degrees, to be baptized.

He required of them repentance, and confession of sin. Their baptism implied and expressed that.

But after! what then? what must we do? was their cry.

“Do! Do justice and love mercy; these are the “fruits meet for repentance.” “Let him that hath two “coats give to him that hath none.”

To the publicans and the tax gatherers he said: no more of your tricks and extortions; "exact no more than is set down for you." To the soldiers he said: cease from your oppression of the poor; "extort nothing by false accusation." "Be content with your pay."

Those were the fruits meet for repentance. For the cultivation and maintenance of a penitent, religious mind, he taught them to Pray, and to Fast.

All who came with hearts moved to genuine penitence were welcomed kindly, and kindly exhorted.

They who came from contemptuous curiosity, or with insidious designs, were sternly rejected.

To the Pharisees and Sadducees all he had to say was: "O generation of Vipers who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come."

And whilst John was baptizing in Bethabara, Jesus came to be baptized of him. There is nothing to shew that John was personally acquainted with Jesus, his kinsman though he was; but he had heard, no doubt from his mother, of the mysterious birth, and quality of the Virgin's Child; and when he saw Him, he knew

Him, just as his "mother Elizabeth knew, as her cousin Mary approached, that the mother of her Lord came to her." So, in the young man, coming now for baptism, John recognised, by a divinely inspired intuition, Him who was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He said: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest thou to me." But Jesus answering said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

How did it become Jesus, who was without sin, to fulfil all righteousness, by submission to the rite which was itself a confession of sin? Just as it became Him to die upon the cross for sin. He was the representative son of man! He came to "bear our iniquities." His will was to submit Himself to all that became a man to submit himself to. And, in His baptism, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove:

"And lo, a Voice from heaven, saying: This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

After His baptism, Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.

That is a portion of the Saviour's life which is enve-

veloped in a deep, and, in many respects, impenetrable mystery. Son of God though He is, He submits to the conditions of human life, and the temptation of the Devil is one of the most grievous of those conditions.

In the opening of His ministry for the Salvation of man, He is led by the Spirit into the desert. Always, we know, it was His habit, especially in important moments of His ministry, to retire into solitude for prayer, and communion with the Father. Now He spends 40 days and nights continuously in this communion.

And then the Tempter comes. You know the story of the 3 Temptations. I need not repeat them. Enough to remember that the Temptation, as a whole, was to the misuse of the Divine Power, of which He was conscious—to use it for self-sake. Enough to remember that the “Son of God,” who was also the “Son of Man,” willed, in the self-humiliation of His human life, to undergo all that a man would undergo in the like case, and that was a real Temptation. Enough to remember that He was tempted in all points as we are. Enough to remember this, and the utter failure of the Temptation, to find in Him any hold of sin whereon to fasten.

In some way (into which we cannot penetrate) it would seem that the 40 days of solitary prayer, and fasting—with the subsequent mystery of the Temptation—was, in the inscrutable counsels of God, a condition of our Salvation, the pre-ordained initiatory step in the ministry of the Messiah.

After the Temptation, and the Fast of 40 days, Jesus returned to the banks of the Jordan, where John still continued his work; and, whilst he was so engaged, John saw Jesus coming to Him.

“Behold,” he said, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!”

“Again, on the morrow, John was standing, and two of his disciples, and he looked on Jesus as He walked, and saith: Behold the Lamb of God.”

“And the two disciples heard him speak; and they followed Jesus.”

“And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? and they said unto Him: Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where abidest Thou? He saith unto them, “Come and see.”

One of these was Andrew, Peter's brother. The other is not named; but it was no doubt John, the writer of the Gospel in which the incident is recorded.

Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, who gave him the name he has borne since in the Church. He said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation Peter (Rock)." These were Jesus' first disciples. He stayed no longer in Bethabara, but set out to return to Galilee. On the way, as it should seem, He found Philip, and said: "Follow me."

Philip found Nathaniel, and said to him:

"We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write:—Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph!"

Nathaniel said: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

"Philip saith unto him: Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Jesus has now five followers; that was the beginning of the Christian Church. He proceeded to Galilee; His stay in Galilee was not long; He attended the

marriage feast in Cana, and there by His first recorded miracle, "He manifested His glory; and His disciples "believed on Him." Then He went for a few days to Capernaum with His mother, His brethren, and His disciples; after which He returned to Jerusalem, at the time of the Feast of the Passover. It was there that He must needs begin His great contest with Scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and the like.

He went straight to the Temple. As the great festivals came round, all the approaches to the Temple were thronged with tumultuous crowds. The changers of money, and the sellers of cattle for sacrifice, had established themselves in the very courts of the Temple; the bellowing of the beasts, the noise of the crowd, all the haggings of the market, profaned and polluted the holy place.

He gave way to His indignation. He asserted His Divine Sonship, and exercised His authority. He drove out the cattle dealers. He overturned the tables of the money changers; and He said:

"Take these things hence, make not my Father's "house a house of merchandise." This was the begin-

ning of that quarrel between Jesus and the Priests, and Pharisees, which was only to end in His death on the cross.

His mission was now declared ; many believed on His name.

After the feast He retired to the country parts of Judaea. His drawing to Himself of disciples there stirred the Pharisees into action against Him ; or, at least, Jesus knew that it would stir them.

So He left those parts and returned once more to Galilee ; and, to do this, He must needs pass through Samaria.

His conversation at the well with the Samaritan woman led to the pressing entreaty of the people for His remaining with them.

“And they said to the woman, now, we believe, “not because of thy speaking, for we have heard for “ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour “of the world.”

Then He went on to Galilee ; again he visited Cana ; and again, at the request of the nobleman, whose son was sick, He went down to Capernaum. He seems to

have remained there about two months, and then to have gone to Jerusalem to a "feast of the Jews," which was probably the feast of Purim (Esther). This appearance of Jesus at Jerusalem is memorable, as marking an advance in the Saviour's public disclosure of Himself, of His person, and His mission.

At the time of His cleansing the Temple (the first Passover of His public ministry), words indeed had fallen from Him in which we can now read a declaration of His Divinity; but they were not so emphasised as to compel the recognition of their true import at the time.

And the public—both rulers and ruled—whilst giving way before His indignation, might well set all down to the ardour of a prophet inspired with zeal for the reformation of abuse.

John, too, had pointed Him out as the Lamb of God, and the few, the small handful of disciples, had believed in Him as the Messiah.

But their thoughts and expectations about the Messiah were as yet far from perfect.

Now, however, He plainly, unmistakably, declares

Himself to be the Messiah—the Son of God—equal with God.

The occasion was His healing of a cripple at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. For this violation of the Sabbath He was called in question by the Jews.

He makes no defence; He declines to discuss the obligations of the Law; He simply declares Himself to be God, the workings of whose will no man may question.

“My Father worketh hitherto; and I work. For this cause the Jews sought the more to kill Him; because He not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God His own Father—making Himself equal with God.”

And He goes on to tell them that as the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, so He, the Son, also quickeneth whom He will; and adds:

“He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath Eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.”

Here was Jesus' first open announcement (for all

ears) that He was the True Messiah; and that He is God's own Son.

Henceforth (although the common people may hear Him gladly), there is between Him and the men of influence—Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, the scribes, and the doctors—open war.

And this ends what I have called the opening of Christ's public ministry; His Baptism and His Temptation were the solemn preliminaries.

The ministry then began with (1) the calling of the five disciples in the neighbourhood of Bethabara, where He was baptized.

(2) A return to, and brief stay in Galilee.

(3) A visit to Jerusalem, when the cleansing of the Temple took place.

(4) A second return to Galilee, through Samaria, and His glad reception by the people there;

(5) Followed by a second visit to Jerusalem to attend "the feast of the Jews" (whichever it was), at which this proclamation of His Messiahship and His God-head took place.

All which seems to have occupied something over a year.

The beginning was now made. His name, and His claim, were in all mouths through the length and breadth of the land. And He returned once more to Galilee, there to begin the second period of His ministry, deepening His instructions, and developing His plans for the Redemption of man.

Of this, the Galileean Ministry, I shall have something to say on Friday next.



Sermon IV.

The Ministry in Galilee.

MARK I. 14.

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the Gospel.”

St. MATTHEW, St. Mark, and St. Luke, all begin their accounts of the ministry of Jesus with the imprisonment of John the Baptist. And they proceed to relate the occurrences of his ministry in Galilee, of which the text is a summary statement.

It is from the recollections of St. John the Evangelist, set down in his old age, that we know what took place in the interval between the Temptation and the imprisonment of John the Baptist; when that happened Jesus went to Galilee, and then began to give out that the time was come—the Kingdom at hand. It was an announcement that would meet there with a ready response; the people there were despised indeed by those who lived in Jerusalem and

its neighbourhood for their provincial rudeness, but none were more ardent in their patriotism. Inhabiting a country full of inaccessible retreats, they were not so easily coerced as were their brethren in the more accessible districts; and they were always ready to rise in rebellion against their oppressors.

They were of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and from first to last, — from those whose valour claimed its praise in Deborah's triumph song, to those who went out with Judas in the days of the taxing—"Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives to death in the high places of "the field."

Amongst them, the ferment of expectation, in which the Jews now generally expected the coming of the Kingdom, and the King, was at its height.

And when Jesus came amongst them, announcing that the Kingdom was come, and that He was the King, they were ready to rally round Him, and to rise in His defence.

His way was not theirs, but that they had yet to learn.

In the village of Nazareth, indeed, where He had lived so long, His reception was far from favourable. The prophet had no honour in His own country. Here it was that He went first of all; on the Sabbath He stood up, as he had aforetime been accustomed, to read the Scripture lesson of the day in the Synagogue.

The lesson was the 61st Chapter of Isaiah: the great prophecy of the Messiah, beginning "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me." "And He closed the Book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down," assumed the attitude, that is, of one about to teach and expound.

"And the eyes of all them that were in the Synagogue were fastened upon Him," "and He began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." They reject Him. "Is not this Joseph's Son?!" He intimates to them that God has others to be saved besides the chosen people; that, already, before them were preferred the Sidonian widow, and the Syrian leper. Then they arose in fury, and would have murdered Him; but He passed through their midst, and went His way; "and came

“down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.”

Capernaum is now but a heap of ruins. The only recognizable building being the Synagogue: as we have every reason to believe, the same in which the Saviour taught, the same that was built by that good Centurion (as attested by the Roman fashion of its form, indicated by the bases of the columns, which mark the nave, and four aisles), that good Centurion who loved the nation, and shewed his love by the lavish magnificence of this privately executed public work, as the custom of his people was. Capernaum stood at the head of the Sea of Galilee—or Lake of Genezaret—this lake described by those who know it as the gem of Galilee—a gem, a jewel, not shewing always with the sapphire's constant blue, but reflecting rather (in the beautiful setting of its encircling hills—those nearest of a sombre violet, the furthest off a pale blue) the opal's ever changing hues. At mid-day, the sky, sharply cut off and framed by these hills, glistens with a silvery whiteness, and the lake lies beneath like another silver sheet. Later on, in the

hushed stillness of nightfall, the lake puts on its opalescent tints, as on its waters the reflections of the surrounding hills appear in broad bands of violet shot with green, passing, as the light fades, into a violet grey. As the stars come out, the light breeze just moves the foliage on the margin: the ripple breaks on the pebbles, in whose prattle the lake seems to wake, and to talk.

Twenty towns and villages in our Lord's time were washed by its waters. Twenty towns. The whole of Galilee, we must remember, dreary and poverty-stricken as it now appears, was renowned in those days for the fertility of its soil, and the riches of its people.

Pre-eminently this was the land suggestive to the Hebrew poets of those images, and predictions of plenty, and prosperity—when “the little hills shall rejoice on every side, the folds shall be full of sheep, the valleys also shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing.”

The roads connecting the great commercial towns on the Mediterranean sea with Damascus, and the far east passed through it. Hither Jesus came, when

repulsed by the people of Nazareth. And this was henceforth His home—so far as He had a home in Galilee—the point of departure for His excursions, and the point to which He returned from them. In some seven months He traversed the whole country, preaching, and teaching, and doing good. The substance—the ostensible theme—of much, and the underlying purpose of all the teaching, was *the revelation of the Kingdom of God*. And there was, too, the actual inauguration of the Kingdom. The nature of the Kingdom He declared in the parables, which you will find in the 13th Chapter of St. Matthew. It was to be a great society—a visible, organized Body. It was a great spiritual influence. It was to consist, until the end of the world, of tares and wheat—bad men, and good. Then, at the end of the world, would come the final separation. In the Sermon on the Mount were laid down the great principles of the Kingdom, and its spiritual character was proclaimed. Jesus not only alienated the multitude, by His refusal of such a Kingdom as they would offer Him, but astounded His very disciples, by the intimation—all incredible

to their preconception—that He, the Messiah, must die at the hands of His enemies. The choosing of the twelve Apostles was the actual inauguration of the Kingdom—the beginning of the organization of Christ's Church on earth.

Already we have seen, immediately after His Temptation, He called, on the banks of the lower Jordan, Peter, and Andrew, and John, and Philip, and Nathaniel; these, it would seem, were with Him from that time, more or less. But still they were not continuously attached to His person. They went back to their own homes, and followed their usual occupations.

On his first arrival at Capernaum, when He made that the centre of His work, Jesus called them (or some of them) again, to be in close attendance upon Him, to give up their calling as fishermen, in order to be made fishers of men.

And then, by and by, "He goeth up into a Mountain, and calleth whom He would, and they came unto Him."

"And He ordained twelve, that they should be

“with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.”

‘That they might be *with him*,’ note that. The training of the Apostles for their work was one great feature of our Lord’s Galilean Ministry; and their training was “to be with Him;” it consisted, besides their qualification to be witnesses of the facts of His life; it consisted in the educative influence of association with His person. Hints, and pregnant sayings, and sometimes explanations and instructions, He gave them, no doubt. But it was not so much by direct instruction as by incidental influence, observation, and reflection, that they were to be educated. Self-abnegation was His work, and theirs. And it is not enough to preach this, men must be inured into it; it is best inculcated by example, and instilled by the tone of the company a man keeps.

As the twelve saw their Master’s life, as in their degree, they shared His life; as they listened to His parables, and mused upon His deep sayings, the seed thoughts took root: slowly, but surely, they began to germinate. And when the Holy Ghost was

given, who brought all things whatsoever Jesus had said to them to their remembrance, the slowly opening seeds fructified; and they were guided into all the truth.

That was the training of the Apostles; but, besides this, their education, by living in the influence of the Master's presence, hearing His words, and seeing His work, seeing His life; besides this, He gave them some training by practical experience.

"And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only—no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse," etc., etc.

The training of the Apostles was a great part of the Master's Galilean work; but it was not all. Jesus purposed also to disseminate the principles and ideas of the Kingdom, and His claim to be the King—the Messiah—widely through the country. He proposed to cast His bread upon the waters, that after many days the crop might ripen. He proposed to evangelise the people; and they "heard Him gladly."

Even the spies, who were sent by the Scribes and Pharisees to find matter for obstructing Him, were carried away by the popular enthusiasm, and returned to their employers, saying:

“Never man spake like this man,” the spies of the Scribes and Pharisees! The opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees, Chief Priests and the rest, though it had not reached its height, was always in a state of more or less active fermentation; and here in Galilee it broke openly out. As miracle after miracle displayed His Divine power, and, as the enthusiastic multitudes hailed Him for their Deliverer, they dogged Him, and defamed Him, ascribing His power to Beelzebub. And on His again once more asserting His authority over the Sabbath, and thereby claiming an authority nothing less than Divine, “the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him—how they might destroy Him.” The purpose of His enemies was now fixed—they would destroy Him. But still the multitude was with Him; they would, in their eagerness, and fanatic violence take Him by force

to make Him their King. But this was to frustrate the divinely purposed plan of man's redemption.

In the Synagogue at Capernaum He dispelled their illusion; He shewed them that the Kingdom He came to establish was a spiritual Kingdom—that He is the bread of life—that they who eat that bread shall live for ever—that union with Him, and through Him with the Father—that that was the Salvation He came to bring; you may see it all recorded in the 6th chapter of St. John's Gospel.

And "upon this, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him," and the people, they too, fell from Him. Soon we hear the sad outpourings of His disappointment—"woe unto thee Chorazin—woe unto thee Bethsaida!" "for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

"And thou Capernaum..... I say it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

The enthusiasm of the Galilean people was after

all but the blazing up of their natural excitability, and proverbial fanaticism, and when that cooled under the shock of their perception that Jesus intended to be no such King as was painted on their imaginations, they fell from Him.

But His work went on all the same. "At that season, Jesus answered and said: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight."

And He continued His work, passing in rapid and frequent journeys through all the region, healing the sick, and spreading far and wide the true idea of the Kingdom of God, and the true principles of Christian life!

And then came another step in the enlightenment of the selected few: "From that time began Jesus to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

They were shocked, even *they* could not realize this. Peter undertook to remonstrate with Him, but his presumption met with sharp reproof.

“ He turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan ; thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.”

Then He went on to warn His disciples that through self-denial lies the only road to Heaven.

“ If any man would come after me let him deny himself—take up his cross”—let him accept willingly obloquy, shame, and pain (the greatest man can inflict upon man). “ Let him take up his cross, and follow me.”

The clouds, portentous of the coming storm, begin to gather, but on their edge the silver lining gleams. Once the gathering glooms of the final conflict part, and reveal for a moment the brightness of the light beyond.

“ After six days, Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart ; and He was transfigured before them ; and His face did shine as the sun,

“and His garments became white as light.” “And, behold, there appeared unto them, Moses and Elijah talking with Him!”

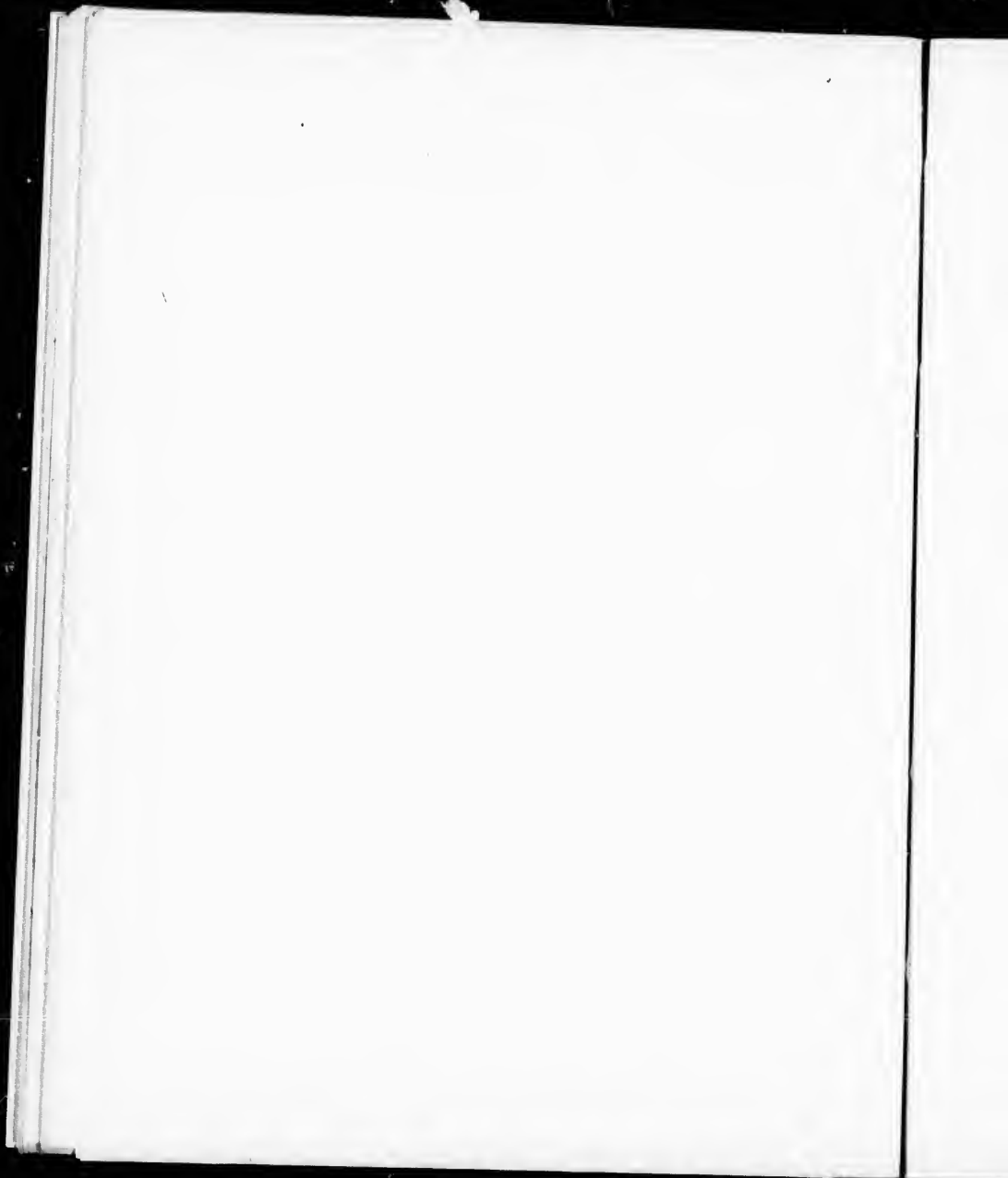
All the significance of this wondrous event, our profoundest meditations will not exhaust. But something of its meaning we seem to see. The Son of God was now entering into the bitterness of His humiliation as the Son of man, and these chosen three (for they were not to tell these things to others as yet, at least) were to be fortified in their faith for what was coming; they were to be made to see the God in Jesus Christ ever breaking through the sufferings and humiliations of the man. And from what Peter said long after, we know that their faith was fortified. In after times they could look back upon what they then saw, and know that their Gospel was no delusion, that they had not followed “cunningly devised fables.”

What there was of comfort and strength in the Transfiguration for the man Christ Jesus Himself, it would be presumptuous for us to pronounce, only this we know: (1) That such support He more than once accepted; (2) That after His Temptation “Angels

“came and ministered unto Him;” (3) And, that in His agony in the garden, there “appeared unto Him “an angel from heaven strengthening Him.” At His Baptism, the solemn inauguration of His ministry, the heavens were opened, and a voice was heard, saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!”

And now, as he is about to enter upon the sadder, sorer times of bitter opposition, revenge, insult, and the humiliation of a degrading punishment, the voice of the Father is again heard through the clear heavens, and the same words are spoken: “This “is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

After this, Jesus returned to Capernaum for a short time, and then left it for ever, and went to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Henceforth, Judæa is the scene of His ministry. There the last great struggles of the battle between truth and falsehood, malignity and goodness, took place, and the consideration of this I shall take up on Friday next.



Sermon V.
The Ministry in Jerusalem.

LUKE IX. 51.

“ And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

IN Galilee Jesus had shewn the sketch, laid down the plan, collected and instructed the Master workmen, for the erection of His Church: that Church, which, according to St. Paul, is “God’s building,” a holy temple, into which all devout Christian people are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

He now goes to Jerusalem, there to lay the cornerstone.

Six months, now, and all will be accomplished!!

In the meantime He goes on His way baffling His enemies, and sustaining, in the fulness of His human feeling, all the distress of the cunning misrepresentation, and malignant persecution to which He was subject; as well as looking on to the steadily approaching day of His cruel subjection,—cruel subjection by His relent

less persecutors, meek submission on His own part to the indignities of a public execution of the most degrading kind—looking forward continually to the steadily approaching time when, having first been made the sport and amusement of mocking slaves, with His crown of thorns and purple robe, and reed for a sceptre, and their mock obeisance in derision of His kingly claims, their mock obeisance passing quickly into petulant insolence and brutality as they smote Him with the palms of their hands and spat upon Him, He should, as a condemned criminal, be lashed with the scourge of the executioner, and should then suffer the cruel tortures of an ignominious death: exposed, an object of public shame and scorn, amid the flouts and jeers of His enemies, and in the desertion of all but the one disciple, whom he loved, the mother who stood by His cross of shame and pain, and one or two other women, who clung to Him to the last. The life He now led, and the anticipation of its terrible, certain, and fast approaching end, could not but throw a sadder and more sombre cast over the last six months spent by the Son of God as a man among men.

His work in Galilee, where He was at one time so high in popular favour, had broken down, as it seemed, in failure. Even His brethren did not believe in Him. Go, they seem to say, if you are indeed the Messiah you claim to be, Go to Jerusalem and assert your claims there, where there are men of learning, and the men of authority to judge of them; what does all this commotion among the ignorant and excitable peasants of Galilee amount to? And even that has come to nothing!!

Yes, He will go. But He will take His own time.

He proposes to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, for there and then His conflict with Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees, is to be renewed, the issue more clearly defined, and the strain of the struggle increased.

But more than once, we shall find, He has, during the last six months, to withdraw from the stress of the storm He raises, and to retire, lest the rage of His adversaries should bring about a premature issue.

The Paschal lamb must be sacrificed at the Passover Feast; and not till then. He went up to Jerusalem, not openly, but, as it were, secretly.

When the companies and caravans passing, as usual, in their vast numbers to the great Fair and Festival at Jerusalem had disappeared, then Jesus, with His own special following, also set out. He took the road that passes through Samaria. We know how enthusiastically He was, on a former occasion, received by the Samaritans; but now "they did not receive Him, "because His face was as though He would go to "Jerusalem."

Even here, too, the first flush of the Gospel fades into the light of common day.

And the jealousies engendered by diversity of race and religion blind men's eyes so that they cannot, will not, see the truth.

It would seem that, in the purposes of Providence, the good seed was to be sown all through the land, but that it was to take root nowhere till after many days.

The seed was to be sown all through the land.

Over much of the country our Lord had Himself passed, and sown the seed with His own lips. Elsewhere He sent the twelve to carry the good news.

And now that, repulsed from Samaria, He was passing to Jerusalem (by the road, probably, that ran along the Valley of the Jordan to Jericho), He sends out other seventy upon a similar errand.

The incidents, and conversations of the journey are told by St Luke, the last being the repose at the house of Mary, and Martha in Bethany.

He was now near to Jerusalem. And here St. John "takes up the wondrous tale."

"Now, about the midst of the Feast, Jesus went up into the Temple and taught."

At once the collision came.

"How knoweth this man letters," said the Jews, "having never learned?"

You must note, in reading St. John's Gospel, that, when he speaks of "the Jews," he generally means the residents of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, who took their tone, and opinion from the Scribes and Pharisees, far more than did those who came up to the feasts from the country parts, and from foreign countries, which latter class composed the "multitude," and the "people" St. John speaks of in

contradistinction to "the Jews." "How," said the Jews, "how knoweth this man letters, not having learned?"

They knew that there was no school in Galilee such as there was in Jerusalem, where those learned in the Law and its traditional exposition gave their instructions to those in their turn aspiring to teach. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

And thereupon Jesus announced to them that His knowledge was not learned in the schools of men.

"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me."

The people were perplexed.

They understood the declaration, and they heard in it Jesus' assertion that He was the Messiah.

And yet, the rulers to whom they looked for guidance, to whose authority they submitted, made no move.

"Do the rulers know, indeed," they said, "that this is the very Christ?"

"And many of the people believed on Him."

And then, when they found that the people were going over to Him, then the rulers and leaders bestirred themselves, and sent officers to take Him.

This attempt failed. The very men who were sent to arrest Him were so awed by His words, and His presence, that they were unable to execute their office.

They returned, saying, "Never man spoke like this man!"

But malice is always obdurate. "Then answered them the Pharisees: Are ye also deceived?" "Have any of the rulers, or the Pharisees, believed on Him?" "But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

And when Nicodemus interposed some calm counsels of justice, and fairness, they turned upon him with sneers, and reproaches. But nothing was done. "Every man went unto his own house."

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. On the morrow He returned to the Temple, and again more emphatically and explicitly declared His divinity.

He knew that they were endeavouring to compass His death; and He told them so. And before He parted from them, he declared Himself to be God's ever-existing Son, in those memorable words:

"Before Abraham was I am!"

The words could have for them but one meaning—that He Himself was God; and they took up stones, to stone Him as a blasphemer!

But this was to precipitate the day of His doom, which was not yet come; and in the tumult of their wild fanatic fury He hid Himself, and went “out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” He seems, from what St Luke says in his 13th chapter, to have gone into Herod’s jurisdiction—passing probably over the Jordan into the district which belonged to Herod. There the seventy returned to Him, and reported with delight the success of their mission.

For some time He remained—healing, and teaching, and confounding the Pharisees, as usual.

And at the Feast of Dedication He again returned to Jerusalem, some two months after His appearance there during the Feast of Tabernacles.

And here, as He walked in Solomon’s Porch, came the reiterated assertion of His Eternal God-head—the plain, clear, statement, which has been from that time to this the backbone of Christian Doctrine, and the stumbling block of all those who would explain the supernatural out of the New Testament.

“The Jews came round about Him, and said unto Him: How long wilt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”

And His answer to that question is closed up in the great, transcendent, truth of the Christian religion: “I and my Father are one!”

Again, the infuriated fanatics took up stones to stone Him!

Again, He retired beyond the Jordan; and there He remained, evangelizing, as of old, until He returned to Bethany for the resurrection of Lazarus.

When the Pharisees heard of this they roused themselves afresh to put Him out of the way.

“Then gathered the Chief Priests, and Pharisees, a Council.”

That was an ominous conjunction of religious fanatics and worldly politicians, all desirous, for different reasons, to put Jesus to death.

The Chief Priests were Sadducees at this time—worldly men, who wanted above all things the quiet enjoyment of place and power; and they were supported by the Pharisees, because, little as the Pharisees liked them, they were doing the Pharisees' work.

“What do we,” they said, “for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”

Caiaphas, the High Priest, bluntly and brutally cut the matter short.

“Ye know nothing at all,” he said, “nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”

There is no question about justice, you see. Justice, or no justice! what is the death of one man, if it averts a storm likely to burst upon us all? That is what the speech of Caiaphas comes to.

Recalling the matter, in his old age, St. John sees, in this course, the accomplishment of God's Providence.

But there can be no doubt that this accomplishment was undesigned on the High Priest's part.

It was the counsel, and the course, of a selfish and ruthless expediency, that made nothing of killing a man for its own convenience.

“From that day they took counsel together for to put Him to death.”

“Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a City called Ephraim. And there continued with His disciples.”

Ephraim appears to have been a City on the borders of Judea and Samaria. As the Passover approached, Jesus quitted Ephraim to go to Jerusalem.

But He did not go directly thither; He made a circuitous tour through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Nothing is told us of the places at which Jesus stopped, only we know that He came round to Jerusalem by Jericho, and Bethany.

Much, however, is told us of what He did, and said, by the way.

There was the healing of the ten lepers ;
The parable of the importunate widow ;
The story of the Pharisee and Publican,
Of Zacheus, etc., etc.

And there was another solemn announcement to the twelve of His coming death, and resurrection, which, even yet, they could not understand.

“Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto

them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again."

"And they understood none of these things." All this and more you will find in the 17th chapter of St. Luke.

Passing through Jericho, where He healed blind men, both at His entrance, and departure, He stopped at Bethany.

Bethany was a quiet village, lying on the slopes of Mount Olivet—about two miles from Jerusalem. And that was our Lord's usual resting place, whilst He was attending the feasts at Jerusalem.

His habit was, it appears, to go in the morning to the Temple, and return in the evening to Bethany, where lived Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, "whom He loved." With them, you remember, He lodged at that time, when Martha cumbered herself with much *servicing*,

and Mary sat at His feet ; and now again there was a social entertainment at which the characteristics of the sisters again shewed themselves.

The Supper was not in their own house, but in that of "Simon the Leper." Lazarus was a guest, Martha was one of those who served, and Mary "took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair ; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

And when one murmured at the expense, Jesus said : "Let her alone, against the day of my burying hath she kept this."

What is the meaning of that ?

The Apostles, we know, could not understand our Lord's plain assurances, that He was about to die ; the thought of it, such was the obstinacy of their prepossession, could find no lodgment in their minds.

Was Mary's tenderer spirit blessed with a truer insight ? Did she alone of all the disciples foresee the sadness of the End ? We know not ; anyhow, her spirit, finely touched, was responsive to the Master's mood.

And the Man of sorrows, reposing, before the week of

agony, of betrayal, and humiliation, and suffering, in the affection of those whom best He loved, received with kindly appreciation the striking, and striking because unusual, and, as it seems costly, expression of her grateful and always tender sympathy.

There for the present we leave Him—in the quiet of Bethany—with Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, whom He loved. On the morrow came the beginning of the End. And of that I shall have something to say on Friday next.

Sermon VI.

The End.

JOHN XII. 12.

“On the next day, much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna, Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

ST. LUKE XXI. 37.

“And in the day time He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.”

THAT is a very compendious description of the way in which our Lord spent the last week of His life upon earth. But the time was crowded with events, and enriched with revelations.

“On the next day,” that is on the first day of the week, our Sunday (for the Supper at the house of Simon in Bethany was on the Sabbath), “on the next day,” Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jeru-

salem. Those who came out to meet Him, with their palms, and their shouts, were the pilgrims, who had come up from the country parts to keep the feast, and who had been talking among themselves about Him, and wondering whether He would be there.

The early enthusiasm had surged up again; and it passed, a loud resounding, but quickly subsiding, wave over the inconstant spirits of the fickle crowd. All too soon their glad Hosannas will cease; and from the same throats will come the fierce fanatic yell for His blood. "Crucify Him," "Crucify Him," would soon be their cry.

It was the old story over again; they would make of Him a King after their own imaginations; and, in the rage of their disappointment, they were worked upon, by the persistently malignant contrivers of Jesus' death, to extort from the pusillanimity of the reluctant Pilate the crucifixion of one whom, in his heart, he believed to be innocent!

In the meantime, Jesus accepts the ovation; He enters Jerusalem as the King fore-announced by the prophets' word. Lowly, indeed, and riding upon an ass, and

a colt, the foal of an ass, but still as the King, the Messiah, come to take possession of His Kingdom. There was no longer need to shun the popular acclamation; mistaken in their conception of His royalty, though the people were; and sure as their commotion was to precipitate the arrest, and execution of the man lifted, by all this excitement, into a notoriety that must drive His enemies to desperation.

His hour was come; He Himself knew the hollowness, and the shallowness, of this brief recurrence of popularity; and His soul was sad. As the procession reached the crest of the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem rose in sight before Him.

“And, when He was come near, He beheld the City, and wept over it.”

This was the day on which, according to the Law, the Paschal Lamb was to be selected; and Jesus designated, and consecrated Himself the very Paschal Lamb, chosen to be the spiritual food of His people, by presenting Himself, on this day, in the Temple.

“And they came to Jerusalem; and Jesus entered “into the Temple.”

“And when He had looked around upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.”

On the morrow, the Monday, His indignation is again roused, as we saw it was in the beginning of His ministry, by the profanation of the Temple; again He “went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold Doves, and said unto them: It is written, my House shall be called a house of Prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

The enthusiasm of yesterday's triumphal entry still continued; and, in the very courts of the Temple, the children were crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” This was more than the Chief Priests and Scribes could endure; they were indignant, but, by Jesus' answer, they were silenced. And He went out to Bethany.

On the morrow—that was on the Tuesday—when he returned to the Temple, they plucked up their courage, and demanded by what authority He did

these things. Again they were silenced by His asking what they thought of the authority of John the Baptist.

At all points they assail Him ; and at all points they are foiled.

He brands their faithlessness to the Trust committed to them by God under the old covenant, in the parable of the Vineyard, where the husbandmen beat, and killed, the servants who were sent to them, one after another, and, lastly, slew the son.

In their exasperation they try to entrap Him with the tribute money ; if He should commend the paying of tribute to the Romans, they hoped that would alienate the people ; if He should advise the refusal of the tribute, that would bring down upon Him the prompt vengeance of the conquering people ; but again they are disconcerted by His referring to their own practice, and their submission to the authorities actually in possession. Then the Sadducees, after their mocking manner, make their attempt, with the story of seven brothers who successively married the same woman ; and they, too, are shewn their utter ignorance of the things concerning which they undertook to question Him.

One, indeed, of the Scribes, who drew out from Him His condensation of all morality, and all religion, into the twofold application of the one great Law of Love, the loving of God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and the loving of our neighbour as ourselves; elicited (by his intuition into, and hearty acceptance of, the great, far-reaching truth) from Jesus the approving comment: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." But in the bulk of the class the acrimony of their hostility was daily—hourly—increasing; and the final rupture quickly came.

In the 23rd chapter of St. Matthew, you read Jesus' stern denunciation of woe after woe upon those hypocrites, play actors, a term seven times repeated with increasing emphasis, not to say vehemence, hypocrites!—fools! He calls them, blind!—serpents!—vipers! And at this time it was that He said to his disciples:

"The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified—now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say—Father save me from this hour.

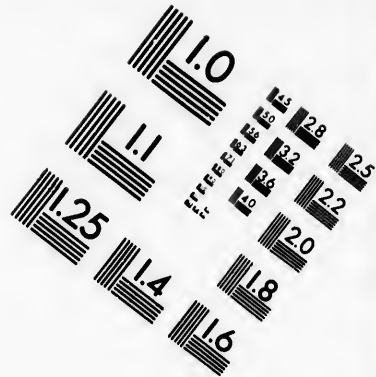
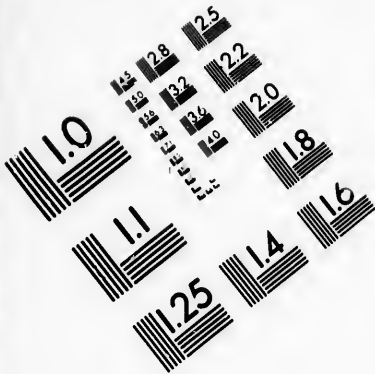
"But for this cause came I unto this hour, Father

“glorify Thy name!” Then came there a voice from heaven saying “I have both glorified it, and will “glorify it again.”

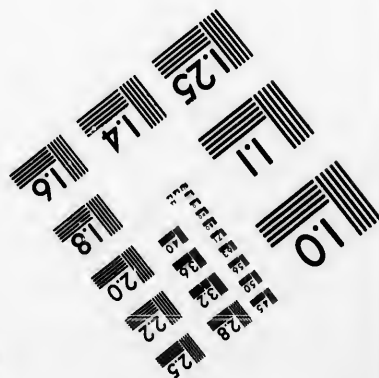
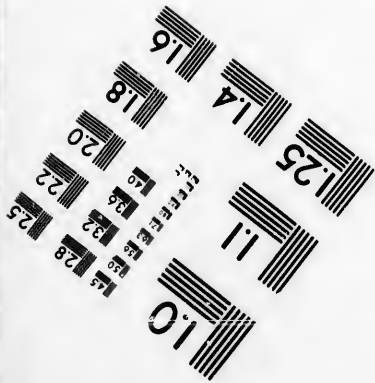
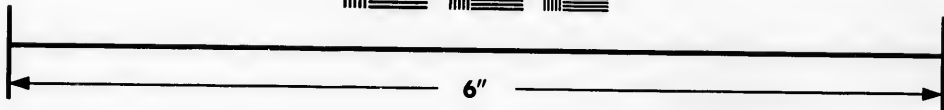
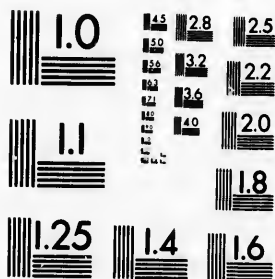
The same voice that heralded His entrance upon the work at His Baptism, the same voice that proclaimed afresh His Divine Sonship at His Transfiguration, as He was going into the last, and saddest, part of His course, now sustains Him, or rather sustains His followers, for the coming events which will make their faith to tremble. By and by, He foretells the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and final overthrow of the old services of the Temple, and passes on from that to speak of the end of the world, and of the day of Judgment!

As He passed out from the Temple on that Tuesday evening, and sat down contemplating Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, His work was to human eyes a failure. Instructions, miracles, warnings, self-sacrificing goodness, all had been tried, and all in vain; at one time, indeed, and another, the multitude had hailed





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Him as their deliverer, but their acclamation was not faith, but only froth.

A few, poor, unlettered men, and a few women, still clung to Him, and believed in Him. That was all.

The Wednesday of the great week was now come, that was the day of the Betrayal.

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the Chief Priests, and said: What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him to you. And they covenanted with Him for thirty pieces of silver.

“And from that time He sought opportunity to betray Him.”

On the morrow, on the Thursday, Jesus sends two of His disciples to prepare for the Last Supper.

“And, when even was come, He sat down with the twelve.”

The incidents of that solemn feast I need not relate; you remember them all: the announcement that the traitor was one of themselves, and their consternation thereat: the designation of Judas: his withdrawal: the institution of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and the rest.

There is, indeed, one thing about this last which ought to be, but is not always, reflected upon; and that is, the unhesitating, uninquiring acceptance with which the twelve received the astounding declaration: "This is my Body!" "This is my Blood!"

How was it that this assertion caused no surprise among them? Turn to the 6th chapter of St. John, and you will see. It had been explained long before; that is the solution. When first uttered, the saying caused astonishment enough; it had been explained; the necessity of the spiritual feeding upon the Body and Blood of Christ had been shewn *then*.

The thing to be done was not new to them; the manner of its doing was what was *now* made known. This is that eating of my flesh, and drinking of my blood, of which I then spoke; this is the way in which you are to carry into act the spiritual feeding upon me of which I then spoke.

Then you remember, too, the great lesson in humility and mutual service among brethren, which Jesus inculcated, by girding Himself with a towel, like a servant, or slave, and washing His disciples' feet.

And then there are those last words of confidential communication between the Master and the disciples. He was so soon to leave; the reiterated injunction to love one another; the deeper insight He gave them into things divine, when He told them, in answer to Philip's question, that He is the revelation of God to man.

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "Believe me, that I am in the Father; and the Father in me;" when he told them of the many mansions in His Father's House; when He said, not I shew you the way, I shew you the Truth, I shew you the Life, but "I am the way, and the Truth, and the Life;" when He told them of the Comforter whom He would send from the Father. And when they had sung an hymn, the customary close of the Paschal Supper,—when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

Jesus, with His disciples, was now on the way to the garden of His agony; and on the way, He taught them, and prepared them, and consoled them still. He told them of their intimate, vital, union with

Him, the True Vine ; He told them again of the Comforter, and what He would be to them, and in them, and for them ; He told them that in the world they should have tribulation, but "be of good cheer." He added : "I have overcome the world." And He prayed the great prayer, for them and for all the Church, in all times :

"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art
"in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one
"in us."

Then they come to Gethsemane ; and He said : "My
"soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Tarry
"ye here, and watch with me !"

And we, too, should watch. With reverential awe,
it becomes us to look upon the agony of Him who
"was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for
"our iniquities."

Into the depths of that suffering we cannot penetrate ; but we know that He suffered all that could come upon a man in the like case ; He was "touched
"with a feeling of our infirmities."

He had all the shrinking from the pain, and the

shame of the horrible death, now so close upon Him, which was the natural consequence of His being very man. And He had more than that; though sinless, He bore the sorrows of sin, for "on Him was laid the iniquity of us all." His heart was torn; but His will was true, His submission perfect.

"If it be possible let this cup pass from me," was the cry of His human feeling; "nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done," was the God-man's response.

Such was the intensity of His emotion that He sweat great drops of blood.

Then came the betrayal, and the arrest. He was carried first to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest; who was the head of the Sadducean party at the time.

This was informal, and only to shew the old man, I suppose, that their machinations were successful.

Then they proceeded to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest; and there was held, in the night, the preliminary examination which custom required. This was, indeed, but a mockery of justice; the report of the examiners was predetermined; it was, that He was worthy of death.

Early in the morning the Council was convened; the Good Friday now had come; there His death was decreed.

At once He was carried to the castle, where, during the tumultuous times of the great Festivals, the Roman Governor was always in residence.

But here arose the difficulty. The Council had decreed the death of Jesus for blasphemy, under the Jewish Law; now, none but the Roman authorities could inflict capital punishment; and Pilate was not willing to degrade the majesty of Roman Law by lending its sanction to carry out what he considered the dictates of local superstition.

Then the enemies of Jesus played upon Pilate's fears; they shifted the grounds of their accusation, and charged Jesus with treason.

"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."

And before the danger of that insinuation—a very real danger when Tiberius was Emperor,—before the danger of that insinuation, Pilate's courage gave way; and, with a feeble protest, he delivered Jesus to

be crucified by Roman soldiers, after the Roman fashion.

“Then delivered he Him, therefore, to be crucified.”

“And they took Jesus and led him away.”

“And He, bearing His cross, went forth to a place “called the place of a skull” (which is called, in the Hebrew, Golgotha), where they crucified Him, and “two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus “in the midst.”

The End was come.

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, “and His Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, “and Mary Magdalene.

“When Jesus, therefore, saw His mother, and disciple standing by whom He loved, He said unto his “mother: Woman, behold thy son!”

“Then saith He to the disciple: Behold thy Mother, “and from that time that disciple took her to his own “home.”

These only stood by Him in the long lingering hours of His torture.

In his great prayer for the Church He had said

“ I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do ! ”

And now, again, with His last breath, He repeats the pregnant word :

“ He said, it is finished ; and He bowed His head “ and gave up the ghost.”

