

Rev. J. P. ...

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Pulpit Criticism.

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THE NORTHERN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
CHURCH STREET.

The service at the above named church was conducted by the Rev. John Burton, on the 29th ult.

In Anglican London, the manufacturers are required to consume their own smoke, and it were much to be desired that a similar edict were extended to an order of gentlemen who are prone to emit literary fumes of a noxious character, and but too often, in volumes; fumes the tendency of which is to obscure "the brightness" of the Sun of righteousness. One is entitled to expect, in those rare instances, wherein a minister is conversant with the original language of the Old Testament, that he will remove obscurities from such portions of the volume as he happens to read in public; the 8th. and 9th. verses of chapter ii. of Proverbs, for instance, would be rendered more intelligible, if read thus, "He keepeth the paths of justice," and "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and justice, and equity." It is impossible also to hear the seventh verse of the lii. chap. of Isaiah, read or sung in the ordinary fashion, without regretting that the beauty of it is lost through it not being rendered, "How opportune on the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings,

who publisheth peace, who bringeth glad tidings of good, who publisheth deliverance, who saith to Zion, Thy God reigneth." The Messiah will arrive most opportunely, in a crisis of manifold suffering, but this is not apprehended by those who do not perceive that the crown is to be as literal as was the cross. The sermon on this occasion was based on Matt. xiii. 44, 45. In relation to it we must be allowed to observe that when the word "darnel," (v. "tares") is so pregnant with meaning, that meaning ought to find expression, at least, occasionally. The darnel so nearly resembles the wheat both in the blade, and in the grain, that it is eminently suited to indicate the too close resemblance between professors and possessors of Christianity. The ordinary perversion of the application of the symbol of leaven did not pass unobserved, but the character of the discourse as a whole, was of such a nature that it appears necessary to occupy one's self rather with what the reverend gentleman did not say, than with what he did. It may be well, in the first place, to present the former of the selected verses, in an amended form, and then to make some attempt to elicit their meaning; v. 44,

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like treasure which had been hidden in the field, which a man having found, hid, and for joy thereof, goeth back, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” We have but to look back six verses in the chapter, to learn from the highest authority that “The field is the world:” it will be necessary, on account of the brief space at our disposal, to assume “that the kingdom of heaven” described, is that kingdom which the prophets predicted when they “testified beforehand the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory which should follow.” 1 Peter i. 11. We will not do such violence to the common-sense of our readers as to suggest that such institutions as the collective churches of the nineteenth century were the “glories” which engrossed the attention of the Seers of Israel. *Treasures* are the glories of a kingdom, and reference to 1 Chron. xxvii. 25; Isa. xxxix. 2; Eccles. ii. 8; and Josh. vi. 19, 24; will indicate that they were so regarded. “The connexion between treasure and the kingdom of God was seen in the reigns of David, Solomon and Hezekiah; for as these were the best of the kings of Judah, so was the kingdom peculiarly glorious in their times; of other kings we read that they voluntarily sent away, or were robbed of the treasures of the Lord’s house, and of the king’s house respectively. These alone are stated to have possessed and retained them. The treasures of these kings were *open*, because this was the period when the Most High gave a glimpse of the glory of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. The treasure of the parable had been hidden, which was the case with regard to the kingdom of Israel when Christ came. Promises had been given to Israel of a time of glory and dominion, in which the Jew was to have the pre-eminence over all nations. But, although there were, in the days of David and Solomon, some glimpses of such a kingdom, when Christ came, they had all vanished. David’s line had long been cut off from the throne. The Jews were not even an independent nation. An

Edomite was their ruler, and they were impoverished and oppressed by the Romans.

Although the word of God assured them of a kingdom which should be theirs, and the nation believed in this treasure, and sighed for it, there was no appearance of it being near at hand. There were, indeed, rumors of hidden riches, but the expectants were poor. The royal treasure was hidden from the oppressed Jew, although Judea was the spot wherein the treasure lay, and the region to be specially glorified by its being brought forth to light. But if the treasure were hidden, *who* hid it, and *when*? As the kingdom is God’s, so did *He* hide it. “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,” Prov. xxv. 2. When the Almighty hides, he digs deep—“*O the depth of the riches of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.*” Romans xi. 33. That much wealth is laid up for future display, is expressed by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians—“That in the ages to come he might show *the exceeding riches of his grace.*” Ch. ii. 7. The time of the treasure’s concealment was the creation of the world. “Then shall the King say to those on His right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit *the kingdom* prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.” Matt. xxv. 34. The parable especially concerns the children of the kingdom; it is therefore addressed to the disciples *in the house*. “*A man found*” this kingdom, and none but a man could find it, “For unto angels hath He not put into subjection the habitable world in its future state, whereof we are speaking. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is *man* that Thou art mindful of him? or *the son of man* that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” Heb. ii. 5-8; Psa. viii. 4-6. The apostle in-

forms his Hebrew brethren that this Son of man is Jesus, verse 9, the "sower" of the first parable, he who scattered the good seed in his field, and he who sowed the mustard-seed in his field. "The *first* (representative) *man* is of the earth, earthy; the *second* (representative) *man* is the Lord from heaven," 1 Cor. xv. 47. Whatever treasure Adam received in the way of dominion and rule, he lost it; it can therefore only be the *second* man who found it. The reason why Jesus found, and Solomon *did not find* the treasure ("That which is far off, and *exceeding deep*, who can find it out? Eccl. vii. 24), is that Solomon was a transgressor and Jesus is the Righteous One. For he who could find the kingdom must not only be a man, but a *righteous man*. "He who followeth after *righteousness and mercy* FINDETH life, righteousness and honor," Psa. xxi. 3. "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise *unto David, a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper*, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be delivered, and Israel shall dwell safely. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. That the Lord Jesus is the finder of the treasure, is indicated by John the Baptist; "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into his hand," Jno iii. 35." The Apostle Paul also unites his testimony with that of the Psalmist, when, quoting him, he says, "Thou hast put *all things* under his feet," Heb. ii. 8. He who has found a treasure, knows where to lay his hand on it, hence, when he needed money for the tribute, he sent Peter to procure some, "Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, *thou shalt find a piece of money*," Matt. xvii. 27. When the Lord needed a beast of burden, on which to enter the capital of his dominions, in His capacity as king, he knew where to find that which he required. "Go unto the village over against you, and straightway *ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her*," Matt. xxi. 2. When the disciples had toiled all night on the lake of Galilee, and caught nothing, Christ teaches them where they might ob-

tain what they sought. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and *ye shall find*," Jno. xxi. 6. When the treasure is opened, the Lord has promised some of it to the conqueror. "To him that overcometh, will I *give to eat of the hidden manna*." Rev. ii. 7. He is Lord of the treasure as well as the finder thereof. Among the precious things of the treasure, is *redemption*, which Jesus also found. "He entered in once into the holy place, *having found eternal redemption* for us," Heb. ix. 12. He purposes to make use of the wealth so acquired, not for himself, but "*for us*," believers. The next announcement of the parable is, "Which, when he found he hid." The verb is in the past tense, not the present, as it would appear to be, in the English translation. This is of importance, because all the other verbs being in the present, it marks *the point of time at which the occurrence related in the parable, took place*. The act of hiding was at that time past; the rest of the parable was transpiring, or yet *future*."

[In the interest of truth, the Editor has felt constrained to depart from his usual course, in relation to the subject selected by the Rev. Mr. Burton, on which to base his sermon of the 29th ult.; he has drawn largely from the expository pamphlets of Mr. Govett, which are the result of a life's intelligent research, and which throw great light on the parables. The Editor hopes to resume the exposition of the parable of "The hidden treasure," in the next number of "PULPIT CRITICISM."]

There are four subjects of permanent interest, on which the Almighty desires the people of God to be informed. 1. The partial and temporary blindness of Israel, to be followed by their final and universal conversion. Rom. xi. 25. 2. The relation of the Old Testament history to believers under the New Testament. 1 Cor. . 1. 3. The spiritual, or inspired, and the relation of the gifts of the ancient Christian Church to ourselves. 1 Cor. xii. 1. 4. The disposal of the dead and living saints at Christ's return, and the comfort to be administered to those who mourn over their departed brethren. 1 Thes. iv. 13.

CORRESPONDENCES.

Matt. xxiv. 2.

“Verily I say unto you there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, (Messiah), and shall deceive many, and ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

“Then said He unto them, (Luke), nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”

“And there shall be famines.”

“And pestilences.”

[To be continued in the next Number.]

Rev. vi.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, saying, as it were, with a voice of thunder “Come.” And I saw, and behold, *a white horse, and he that sat on him having a bow, and a crown was given unto Him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer. Psal. xlv. 4-5; Sept.; Zech. vi. 11, chap. xiv. 14, and xix. 11.”

* Zech. vi. 3. Symbol of victorious power.

“And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come,” and there came forth another, *a red horse, and to him that sat on him was it given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.”

* Zech. vi. 2. Symbol of war.

“And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come;” and I saw, and behold, a *black horse, and he that sat on him having a pair of balances in his hand; and I heard as it were, a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, †*a measure of wheat for ‡a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny,* and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.”

* Zech. vi. 2. Symbol of famine.

† Only sufficient for a man's daily support: about twenty times the usual price.

‡ Good wages.

“And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard (the voice of) the fourth living creature, saying, ‘Come;’ and I saw, and behold, a livid horse, and he that sat on him was called *Pestilence*, and Hades followed with him, and there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with pestilence, and by the beasts of the earth. Lev. xxvi. 21, 22; Deut. xxxii. 23, 24, 25 and 34; Ez. v. 14-17, and xiv. 21; Jer. v. 5, 6, xv. 1-3, and xxvii. 8; Isa. xxx. 6.