the intuitions of man's moral sense, and with the principles of human government.

In a concluding paper I shall consider the extent of the Atonement.

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PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

MATTHEW VIII. 14. MARK I. 29. LUKE IV. 38.

"A MAN'S foes shall be they of his own household." This general law of the devoted, of all who stand on a higher level than custom sanctions, was fulfilled in our Lord Himself. They did not believe on Him. They sought to take Him. Their estrangement gave to His enemies the opportunity for at least one sarcastic interruption.

But this estrangement was inevitable, when once His claims were put forward and acceptance was refused to them. For those demands were peremptory. He that was not for Him was against Him. It needs no reference to their possible irritation when the common home in Nazareth became untenable to explain the fact that the anointed of the Lord could not live in close domestic relations with men who rejected his authority and reckoned him to be mad. Henceforth it is clear enough that "His home was not their house."

Many indications combine to strengthen the belief that at least for a time Jesus made "the house of Peter" the centre of His early journeys. There, in humble comfort, Andrew lived happily with his brother, to whom, the moment he found the Christ, his fraternal heart turned with the glad announcement. Although he seems to have been the elder, yet their common dwelling was naturally known

as the house of the married brother; and there also the mother of Peter's wife found a home, and took her share in the duties of the household. All this conveys an impression of domestic happiness which is confirmed by the fact, incidentally mentioned long afterwards, that Peter's wife became the companion of his perilous missionary journeys. (1 Cor. ix. 5.)

We can well believe that such a harmonious and loving abode was attractive to the Prince of Peace, and that it soothed His spirit to retire hither at intervals from the suspicions, contradictions and blasphemies of the leaders of the people.

After the healing of the demoniac in the synagogue, Jesus turned to this quiet and well-known home. But its peace was clouded. The mother of Peter's wife lay sick of a great fever (typhus, or some such virulent malady, as distinguished from fevers of a long and wasting type) "and they besought him for her." It is Luke the physician who thus specifies her ailment, and adds this strong expression of the appealing anxiety of her relatives. Mark simply mentions that "they tell Him of her" (λέγουσιν . . . περὶ) but it will be remembered that the same mannerism, the expression of a petition in the mildest form, reappears a little later in his Gospel: He spake unto His disciples that a little boat should wait upon Him" (εἶπε . . . ἵνα, iii, 9). St. Matthew is only concerned with his Lord's own sympathetic recognition of distress, and we might have supposed him to mean that Jesus saw her and restored her to health spontaneously and unsolicited. It is one of the numerous cases in which one narrative warns us not to rely overmuch upon the mere omissions of another.

Christ wrought no miracle to relieve Himself from the common burdens of humanity. These indeed pressed the heavier upon Him because He uplifted their weight from

other men; and it is in his narrative of this very day's events that St. Matthew applies this principle to His mastery over disease (viii. 17). All the more, He relieved with especial promptness the distresses of those who were near to Him, of His hosts when their wine failed, of his followers threatened by hunger, of His disciples alone upon the waters, of those whom he loved in Bethany. Thus He was, in temporal as in spiritual trouble, the Saviour of all men, yet especially of them who believe. And therefore He is prompt to respond to this appeal for one whom He must have known, and whom His disciples evidently loved, an appeal at once so fervent and so delicate, so free from dictation, that it was equally well characterised as beseeching Him and as telling Him of her.

Thus it is that St. Paul describes our fitting prayers in temporal anxiety as a making known of our requests unto God, and yet tells us that he himself, in such a case, "besought the Lord thrice." (Phil. iv. 6; 2 Cor. v. 8.)

St. Luke, with the special interest of a physician in the treatment of disease, tells us, what is peculiar to this case, that He stood over her, and that He rebuked the disease as if it were what it represented, an embodied principle of evil. The same consciousness of moral evil, as if present where its footprint is so visible, is still more evident in the fourth Gospel, when, as He approached the grave of Lazarus, we are twice told of some urgent movement in His spirit which He deliberately fostered, like one who sets himself against a foe (*ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι, καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν . . . πάλιν ἐμβριμώμενος*, John xi 33, 38). Think whether Christ's rebuke of disease, His hostility to death (of which He shall be "the plague") is not the justification of His church in her long warfare against the insanitary and degrading conditions of our social life.

Nor is His bending over a patient whose disease was virulently infectious lacking in suggestion. For it must be observed that Jesus was never rash; He who steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem exposed Himself to no danger without sufficient cause; and until the appointed time, the third day when He should be perfected, was content to withdraw Himself, to walk no more in Judæa, and even to hide Himself from them.

Now this adds weight to the fact that His attitude toward the infection of disease is the same as toward ceremonial pollution, the same which we shall have to observe when we study His treatment of the leper; it is that of one consciously and wholly beyond its reach. Both contagion and ceremonial defilement are physical adumbrations of that spiritual weakness, that exposure to pollution of the soul and infection from other men's evil, which Jesus came to overcome. And therefore He set them utterly at nought.

St. Matthew tells us nothing of this, and apparently ascribes the miracle to the mere touch of Jesus; while it is characteristic of St. Mark that what He dwells upon is the energetic action by which the Lord appealed to faith and evoked its response; He not merely touched her but took her by the hand, and raised her up, and the fever left her.

No three accounts could harmonize more readily and with less pressure, and yet no three could be more manifestly independent. The narratives offer as easy and fair a test as could be asked, of the attempts to make any one Gospel the progenitor of the other two. And it is especially manifest that Matthew and Luke could not have written with St. Mark's Gospel in their hand. For in no place could the special sources of information which that evangelist drew upon be more valuable than in respect to Peter's household. Yet neither of the other Gospels shows

any sign of depending on the second. Their testimony agrees with it, but it is the free accord in variety which belongs to independent narrators of an event well known to all.

We are constantly told that the evidential value of the Christian miracles is at an end. And it is clear enough that this incident does not help our controversy with that vulgar unbelief which regards the first preachers of Christianity as deliberate impostors. We will even grant that no place could be more convenient than Peter's house for the hatching of such a plot as that which Renan imagined, to explain the story of Lazarus. If any one thinks that liars proclaimed a Messiah who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, that the noblest and most spiritual of all creeds was conceived and propagated by low-minded swindlers, and that a group of homely men were glad to suffer the loss of all things, even life itself, in order to glorify a dead man by ascribing powers to him which they knew that he had not possessed, this is not the story which will assist him to a better mind. Such theories are an outrage upon criticism, in degree far more scandalous, but of the same kind as the notion that Luther's high-souled preaching was inspired by spite and lust. It is not by evidence that they are to be exploded, but by apprehension of cause and effect, by reflecting that thorns will not bear figs.

But this narrative has a deadly significance for the popular theories (more specious only because they are more vague and difficult to bring to book) which represent the greatest of all revolutions as wrought by sincere persons of weak capacity, easily swept along by popular opinion (which they spent their lives in resisting) and so taking for miracles the result of the public effervescence. Here is a work of early date and before enthusiasm reached its

height,[1] a work to which no reasonable theory of the Synoptic Gospels, however sceptical, can refuse the weight of apostolic attestation. For it could not have been inserted in all three, unless it were current in days when the lack of such attestation would have been fatal to a story professing to deal with the domestic concerns of two leaders among the apostles. Moreover, their close connection with it is the simplest, perhaps the only explanation of the existence in all three, without copying from one another, of such a detail as that she ministered unto them. But if the story is of their telling, and if they are not impostors, it is certainly true. Who can doubt the competence of Peter and Andrew to judge of the reality of a work of healing performed in their own house, upon their own relative prostrated by a serious malady, the symptoms of which were perfectly well known? As soon as the coarse theory of false witness is abandoned, the conclusion is irresistible, for the narrative cannot be removed from their cognizance, and the event is one upon which they cannot have wanted the means to form a competent and sober judgment.

The very calmness and moderation of the narrative, its humble rank as a marvel among the miracles, the absence of extreme urgency, of such dread of imminent death, or sorrow for its consummation, as in the case of the child of Jairus or in that of Lazarus, bear ample witness that it sprang from no myth-gendering desire to connect a worthy miracle with the name of Peter—a tendency quite foreign to the tone of all the Gospels.

Such a story, then, the three evangelists have related, briefly and simply, as became men to whom it was a familiar and an interesting event, yet overshadowed by many far greater works.

[1] Keim rightly proves its early date by the great impression which resulted from this relatively small work.

There is always a harmony, a consistent display of character, between many acts of the same person. Give us a sufficient number of them, and without any other evidence they will go far to attest each other, as the paintings of the same artist do. No person could attribute to Wellington a story characteristic of Napoleon, or to Melanchthon any one of the great sayings or deeds of Luther. The manner of Julius Cæsar is clearly to be distinguished from that of Augustus. And if a lost epistle were discovered to-morrow, we could not hesitate between the authorship of John, or James, and that of Paul; nor would it be possible to impose half a dozen chapters of any later author upon the Church as the work of any one of them.

Now when we are told that the gospel miracles represent the superstitions of a generation or two of converts, a "tendency" rather than a character, our reply will not be complete without observing that what they all represent is not a tendency but a very vivid and distinct character, the same character as speaks in the discourses, the one thing which scepticism cannot possibly deny, because it is absurd to make any one but Jesus Himself answerable for all that is most characteristic in His religion, for its tendency and temper through all subsequent times. If any one else could be dreamed of in such a connection, it would be the master-mind of Paul. Yes, but what is masterful in Paul is the mind, a mind on fire with devotion and love, but working by intellectual methods still. But an ardent mind is not what the miracles display. It is the purest individualizing personal pity, a pity which counts no contact with misery repulsive, which cares about the smallest inconvenience, which is not expressed in all literature so exactly as in many phrases of Him to whom these actions are ascribed. "I am among you as he that serveth." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." "Your

heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of" food and clothing.

We recognise this when we meet it again, pitying the multitude when they have nothing to eat, having compassion on the leper and touching him, providing that the daughter of Jairus shall be fed, and that the widow of Nain shall freely embrace her son, and that Lazarus shall be disencumbered of his grave-clothes. We find it here in the tenderness of His manner to an aged and sick woman, as He stoops over the sufferer, touches her, and raises her up with His own hand.

In what is said of her behaviour also we recognise veracity and genuine human nature. When the apostles restored one who had been always lame, the joy of new physical power was seen in his walking and leaping, and loud praise. Such exuberance of delight was not to be expected here. But there is the pleasure of recovered faculty, as she arose and ministered unto them.[1] This action shows also the prompt fulness of her recovery from a disease which naturally leaves much prostration after it. Thus, in St. John's Gospel, the nobleman expected only an incipient amendment, but found that the disease (a fever also) had quite departed at the hour when his prayer was granted.

The same character is to be recognised in the spiritual work of Jesus, even to this day. It is still a personal compassion which cools the worse and deadlier fevers of the soul; still when invoked He bends over us, and our healing is due to no mechanical grace, but to His own direct act of love; and still it is ours, when healed, to minister to Him and to His people.

[1] Is it necessary to protest against the appeal which has been made to this ministration (διηκόνει) in behalf of an official ministry of women? Surely the employment of the word in this one place should be enough to show that it has no official significance whatever, and to forbid its citation on behalf of a cause which needs no such treacherous support.

Two such miracles as the public healing of the demoniac, and immediately afterwards this relief of a disease which must have been notorious, had their result in a great movement, the townsmen carrying all their sick folk to the door. But since it was the Sabbath, (which may be affirmed, with far more confidence than Trench expresses, from the assembly in the synagogue,) this bearing of burdens, however humane, was postponed by their superstition until sunset. Then He went forth, and healed all their sick.

How are we to explain St. Matthew's citation, as connected with this great act, of the words of Isaiah, Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows? First let us observe that the Hebrew word is more truly rendered "sicknesses" than griefs; and next, that the quotation opens the second section of this mighty prophecy, the section which, following after the announcement of a mysterious and august sufferer (lii. 13–liii. 3) declares that He suffers not as one of us but in our stead, bearing our sickness and our sorrows, healing us with His stripes, loaded with the iniquity of us all (liii. 4–7).

It will then appear plain that nothing is implied about the time of His endurance, as it should be identical with this hour of the relief of others, so that the Evangelist could only mean that He suffered, then and there, through the intensity of His sympathies with woe, or through the additional strain imposed upon His weariness by their intrusion. No such meaning, by whatever authority commended, can satisfy the strength of the context which Matthew had in his mind. Never was it less likely than on that evening that Jesus was supposed to be smitten of God.

But now, and according to the best arrangement, now for the first time, Jesus deals not only with individual griefs but those of the whole district; He relieves the people, the public, a population. True that St. Matthew's

arrangement of events is different (cf. iv. 24, 25), but one evidence that his sequence is not chronological is that not before, but now he pauses to consider the effect on Christ Himself, the necessary consequences, of His becoming the Healer of Humanity. If, as we have seen, sickness is the shadow cast by sin, then it could not be removed if sin were irremovable; so that all healing is a pledge, almost a sacrament, of pardon, and the connection is far more than verbal between the two clauses of the verse, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." Therefore in administering health to the ailments of the nation, He accepted for Himself the conditions upon which alone their sins could also be removed. He bound Himself to bear them, that He might bear them away.

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