

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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It is not without significance that the chapter on Holy Scripture stands

**The Vital
Question for
Bible Students.**

first in the Westminster Symbols. Its position indicates the fundamental relation existing between one's doctrine of Scripture and the other articles of his faith. Perhaps the most vital question at present confronting the student of the Bible is—What think you of the Scriptures themselves? Our attitude towards the Book can hardly fail decisively to affect our attitude towards its several statements. Unquestionably one who regards it as a *revelation of the mind of man* concerning himself, the world, its author, its origin, and its destiny, may still find the Bible an interesting, and even a very important book. But, obviously, he will, in the very nature of things, take up towards it an attitude wholly different from one who esteems it to be a *revelation of the mind of God* upon these several points. Even as a record of what men have believed concerning God, and what duties they have conceived themselves as owing to God, the Bible will always occupy a conspicuous place in the history of the development of the human mind, and partic-

ularly of the so-called religious instincts of man.

Viewed in this light, however, the Bible at once takes its place alongside of other similar

**An Effect to be
Considered.**

records. Its statements are at once stripped of the element of finality—except for those who think that in religious matters the human mind reached the acme of its development some two thousand years ago. Further, its statements will have only a relative value, and command only a qualified assent and reverence. A stream cannot rise higher than its source. If the Bible be a revelation of the minds of its various authors, it will command assent and reverence only in proportion as we may esteem its several authors to have been qualified to deal with the large and intricate problems that they have assumed to handle. We may at our pleasure, add to, subtract from, modify, or even wholly set aside what they have to say. We would, of course, do this with that courtesy of phrase that is characteristic of our advanced and cultured age; but to expect us to refrain from doing it, would be to require us to lay aside that intellect-

and he labors under a blighting disqualification for such a task. It has been well said that "a habit of suspicious interpretation which neglects plain facts and dwells on doubtful allusions, is as unhealthy in theological criticism as in social life, and not more conducive to truth."

CHRIST'S WOES ON THE CITIES OF GALILEE.

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The two evangelists, Matthew and Luke, report our Lord as uttering terrible denunciations against the Galilean cities, Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida, in which or in whose neighborhood "most of his mighty works were done" (Matt. xi, 20-24; Lk. x, 12-15). Both gospels also connect therewith the Lord's thanksgiving that the truth had been hidden from the wise and prudent and had been revealed unto babes, as well as his memorable declaration, so like some of his utterances recorded in the fourth gospel, "all things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son (or, who the Son is) but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father (or, who the Father is) but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (Matt. xi, 25-27; Lk. x, 21, 22). Matthew further adds the beautiful and famous saying "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, etc." (xi, 28-30). Apart from the intrinsic worth and the meaning of these words of the Lord, an interesting and somewhat perplexing question arises from the fact that the two evangelists appear to locate them at quite different periods of his ministry. In Matthew, they follow the discourse spoken after the messengers from John the Baptist had departed. It is quite certain that the messengers from John went to Jesus when the latter's ministry in lower Galilee was approaching its height, not long after the appointment of "the twelve" and the Sermon on the Mount (see the order of events in Luke vi, and vii), and when Christ was engaged in making his great appeal to the Galileans for faith in himself and his message. In Luke, on the other hand, the woes are imbedded in the instructions to "the seventy," and the other sayings mentioned are assigned to the time of the seventy's return. This, however, was long after Jesus had fin-

ished his ministry in lower Galilee, and when he had turned his face southward to go to Jerusalem (Lk. ix, 51). The two situations therefore are quite different; and it becomes a matter of interest, not only for the arrangement of the life of Christ but for the best interpretation of the sayings themselves, to determine, if possible, when they were really uttered.

It is to be noted first that the language of the two reports is nearly identical. The woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida are verbally alike except for the introduction in Luke of the word "sitting" before "in sackcloth and ashes," and for the introduction in Matthew of "day of" in the clause "in the judgment." In Matthew, indeed, we read at the close of the woe against Capernaum "for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom, which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. Howbeit I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee;" whereas in Luke the latter of these sentences is applied to any city which would not receive the disciples and the first of them is not reported at all. These differences, however, do not destroy the practical identity of the two reports, especially when it is observed that the following thanksgiving and the declaration of the Lord's unique relation to the Father are also nearly identical in language. The supposition, therefore, that these sayings were spoken on both occasions is improbable. This view has, indeed, been held. It is followed by Robinson in his *Harmony*. But the similarity of the language, apart from other considerations to be mentioned hereafter, make the impression that we are dealing with sayings of our Lord which belong to some one occasion and not to two. Some modern critics on the other hand hold that the sayings were found by the evangelists in an earlier collection of the discourses of Jesus (the so-called *Logia*) and were located by them without reference to the real occasion on which they were spoken, according as each thought them most appropriate (see J. Weiss on Luke). But we are not prepared to treat the evangelists as such second-hand and misleading reporters. We should be rather impelled to examine their narratives to learn whether indeed they do mean to locate the sayings differently. If they do, it would be better to accept the idea that the sayings were repeated than to discredit the gospels.

It is to be further noted that both evangelists make it clear that the thanksgiving of Jesus was uttered in pretty close connection with the woes. Matthew states that it was "at that season" (xi, 25, R. V.) ; that is, at the same season or period of time when the woes were spoken. His use of this phrase indeed in the two other places where it occurs in his gospel (xii, 1, xiv, 1, R. V.) shows that he employed it vaguely, and that it was not meant to be a minute designation of time. Still it loosely joins the thanksgiving with the woes. Luke, however, is more definite. He not only connects the woes with the instructions to the seventy, but he closely joins the thanksgiving to the time of the seventy's return, using the phrase "in that same hour" (x, 21, R. V. See his use of the same expression in vii, 21, xii, 12, xx, 19). It is thus quite evident that the whole discourse, including both the woes and the thanksgiving, with the remarks following the latter, belong to the same occasion. Not that they were spoken on the same day. Luke specifically states that they were not; for, as already observed, he puts the woes with the instructions to the seventy and the thanksgiving after their return. But the whole belongs to one general situation. If either evangelist gives the occasion on which the woes were spoken, that carries with it the thanksgiving. We cannot suppose that one part of the discourse was spoken after John's messengers had departed and the other part when the seventy were sent out or returned. Either the whole was repeated or else it all belongs to one of the two situations.

Let us inquire, then, which of the two evangelists really gives us the occasion to which these sayings of Jesus belong.

To suppose that Matthew meant to locate them immediately after the departure of John's messengers is neither necessary nor probable. It is undoubtedly true that his gospel, especially in its first half, arranges its material topically. He groups it about subjects and could not have intended to follow the chronological order. Thus he begins the Galilean ministry with the Sermon on the Mount as an example of the teaching of Jesus in founding his kingdom, and he seems also to have included in his report of that sermon sayings spoken on other occasions. The sermon in turn is followed by a collection of miracles and other events (viii, 2—ix, 35) which are certainly not given throughout in chronological order, if at least Mark's order is consecutive. This section again

is followed by one dealing with Christ's instructions to the apostles (ix, 36—x, 42), in which directions given at various times are brought together. It is even probable, therefore, that when in chapter eleven he joins the woes and thanksgiving to the discourse which followed the departure of John's messengers, he was governed by a like topical method. For in that discourse Jesus had lamented over the popular unbelief which would hear neither John nor himself. Very naturally, therefore, did Matthew append the woes on the Galilean cities. His doing so, however, in view of his method elsewhere, cannot be regarded as evidence that they were then spoken.

Nor can his use of the phrase "*then* began he to upbraid" (xi, 20) be considered necessary to indicate immediate sequence of time. "Then" is of course an adverb of time and is used constantly by Matthew as a particle of transition from one thing mentioned to another. Its use is one of the marked features of his simple narrative. It denotes chronological succession so far as to affirm that the event to be mentioned followed after that which had been mentioned. But it cannot be held to indicate always immediate historical sequence. Thus in xii, 22 it introduces a passage which was certainly separated by a considerable interval from the events previously recorded (compare Mk. ii, 22; Lk. xi, 14). It is not necessary, therefore, to consider the phrase "*then* began he to upbraid the cities" as more than a transition to a later discourse which was suggested to the mind of the evangelist by what he had just written.

It is moreover inherently improbable that these woes on the cities of Galilee were uttered by our Lord at the time of the departure of John's messengers. Christ was then engaged in a circuit through Galilee (comp. Lk. vii) intended to arouse the inhabitants to the acceptance of his mission. His popularity was great. His Galilean ministry has not yet reached its crisis. He was still offering himself as their Messiah and had by no means terminated his effort to persuade them. It is true that he lamented over their unbelief; and hence the possibility that the woes over the cities belonged to this time. But it is altogether more probable that they came later, when his Galilean ministry had ended in failure to convince the people of his spiritual purpose, and when he placed Galilee at his back that he might face the cross at Jerusalem.

When, however, we turn to Luke's account, cogent reasons present themselves for believing that he has disclosed the occasion on which these woes, with the thanksgiving shortly following, were uttered.

We note that Luke imbeds the woes in the instructions to the seventy. He does not append them to the instructions but makes them part of them (x, 12-16). This of itself compels us to locate them here, whether they were a repetition of former teaching or not. They were moreover singularly appropriate to the situation. Jesus had now left Galilee and was about to make his last offer to Judea and Perea. The woes on the Galilean cities which had not received him were meant to impress the new heralds with the solemnity of their mission to the cities of Judea, and mark the Lord's deliberate conclusion of his long work in the northern portion of the land. Equally appropriate to the return of the seventy was his thanksgiving and declaration of his unique relation to the Father. In the joy of his disciples over their success (x, 17) there was suggested the cause for his own rejoicing; and in the triumph over Satanic power which the seventy had reported there was suggested his statement of his relation to the Father. The passage thus admirably adjusts itself on internal grounds to the external situation in which Luke places it, and the conviction deepens that he has rightly given the occasion of its utterance. If then it is improbable, as we have seen, that these words were spoken twice, we may see in Luke their historical setting and in Matthew a citation of them adapted to the subject about which he was writing.

With regard finally to the words "Come unto me, all ye that labor, etc.," which Matthew alone appends to the discourse (xi, 28-30), it is impossible to be as confident as of the preceding verses, because of their absence from Luke. Yet, certainly, they are most appropriately attached to the thanksgiving of Jesus that God had revealed the truth to babes and to his declaration that through him alone men knew God. They also accord well with the joyful report of the seventy. It is best, therefore, provisionally, at least, to suppose that they too were uttered after the seventy's return. It may be, however, that they were spoken at another time, and were appended by Matthew, just because of their appropriateness (comp., too, their relation to verse 5), in

the same way in which he was led to append the whole discourse to his report of Christ's teaching about John.

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.

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There are three mountains which have been hallowed, and made forever memorable in the history of Redemption, by super-eminent manifestations of the Divine glory.

One is Mount Sinai upon which the glory of the Lord rested for many days, "and the sight of this glory was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel:" another is Mount Zion, "the mountain of the heights of Israel"—"the holy mountain of God,"—on which the Shekinah rested as the visible manifestation of the abiding presence of Jehovah: the third is "the high mountain," which Peter designates as "the holy mount," where Jesus was transfigured before his chosen disciples, "and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

The mountain of the Transfiguration is not mentioned by name in the narrative of the Evangelists, and the only clue to its location is in the incidental notices which connect it with our Lord's brief sojourn in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi. A monastic tradition as old as the fourth century, in apparent disregard of these incidental notices, has located the scene of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in Galilee. During the sixth century three churches were built upon the summit of Tabor to commemorate this event, and from that date until the beginning of the latter half of the present century this traditional assumption was generally accepted by biblical scholars. Mount Tabor is a conspicuous elevation of rare beauty and symmetry in its outlines and proportions, and has been aptly styled the Righi of this mountain region. There is no intimation, however, in the sacred narrative which in anywise connects it with the scene of this great Epiphany. It has frequent mention in the Old Testament as a famous landmark and rallying point in Israel, but there is not a single allusion to it, either by name or association, in the New