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ART. I.—*Quakerism not Christianity: or Reasons for renouncing the doctrine of Friends. In three parts. By Samuel Hanson Cox, D. D., Pastor of the Laight Street Presbyterian Church; and for twenty years a member of the Society of Friends.* Pp. 686.

WE have rarely sat down to our work as critics with so deep a sense of our incompetency to the task in hand, as we bring with us to the examination of the book whose title we have here given. We have two reasons for this, one of which grows out of the character of the book, the other out of the nature of the subject. As to the book, our readers will readily enough understand what we mean, who are acquainted with the splendid eccentricities of its author, and the peculiarities of his intellectual progeny. And as for the subject, after the best investigation we have been able to give to it, we are free to acknowledge that there are some important points in respect to which we are still in doubt: indeed, there is so much of mysticism belonging to the system of the Quakers, and so much of what seems to us contradiction in those authors who are recognised as standards of the sect, that it appears to us well nigh a hopeless matter to arrive at any thing

to their reward, they have been permitted to see, from what appeared to them like a grain of mustard seed, a tree of life towering up to heaven, and yielding fruit for the healing of the nations. Blessed be the God of providence and grace that he raised up such a man as Burder at such a period; that he still raises up great and good men to occupy important stations; and that by thus meeting the exigences of the church, he conveys a pledge, that she shall gain a complete triumph, and survive in immortal glory.

We cannot forbear to add, that in reading this deeply interesting Memoir, we have been strongly impressed with the fact, that few families have been so much privileged, and in the best sense honoured, as that of Mr. Burder. His parents seem to have been eminently pious; and his father certainly was possessed of an uncommonly vigorous intellect. In the marriage state also, he was peculiarly blessed; and the wife who combined every amiable and desirable quality, was also continued to be the companion of his old age. His children who reached maturity he was permitted to see, without an exception, walking in the fear of God; and as for those who survive him, it is enough to say, that they are all honoured and useful, and that one of them, by request of the others, has written this Memoir alike honourable to father and the son. May the same spirit of deep and devoted piety, which so much distinguished their venerable parent, be found also in their children, and children's children, to the latest posterity.

ART. V.—*A Treatise on the Parables of our Lord; by the Rev. Frederick Gustavus Lisco, of Berlin.*

PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

THE author of the following treatise is the pious and acceptable preacher of St. Gertrude's church in Berlin. And the treatise itself is the introduction to a valuable work which he gave to the public last year, entitled *DIE PARABELN JESU exegetisch-homiletsch bearbeitet*; or "the Parables of Jesus, treated exegetically and homiletically." Mr. Lisco had previously published a volume of sermons on the same subject, and appears to have made it the favourite study of his life. The work from

which we make this translation, contains a classification of the parables, after which each is treated of separately, first in the exegetical way, and then with reference to public exposition or pulpit address. The author professes to pursue his exegesis with an entire independence of dogmatical preconceptions, and in consequence of this has departed very widely from what may be denominated the prevalent systems of Germany. In other words, he has, by submitting himself candidly to the obvious exegetical meaning of the sacred text, arrived at doctrines strikingly like those which the Reformers acquired through the same process. His book abounds with rich citations from Luther and his coevals; and, though himself a Lutheran, he has made abundant use of the labours of Calvin.

With respect to the general observations on parabolical diction which we proceed to give, we beg our readers to observe that we are far from offering them all as our own opinions; nor do we present them as indications of surprising talent. Mr. Lisco has evidently sought utility rather than applause. His writings are very free from the wildness, paradox, and latitudinarian daring which are so freely besprinkled over the pages of his countrymen. Indeed, like Hengstenberg, he appears to be cast in a mould nearly resembling that of our English and Anglo-american models. It is our belief, that the whole book might with advantage be given to the American public.

I. THE NAME AND IMPORT OF THE PARABLE.

The word parable, or similitude, properly means a laying together, or side by side, and happily denotes the peculiarity and intimate nature of this kind of poetry. For, in the parable, an image borrowed from the sensible world is accompanied by a truth from the world above sense, and the proper or literal meaning of the narrative, which is used as an image, is the mere vehicle and representative of a truth and doctrine beyond the sphere of sense. In this respect, the parable is not unlike the fable, yet they are essentially distinct. We find in both, indeed, a narrative, intended to teach some truth, or enforce some duty; but the tracts from which the two sorts of poetry borrow their imagery are not the same. The genuine fable does not move at all in the field of actual existence; it allows irrational and inanimate things from the kingdom of nature to think, speak, act, and

suffer; regard being had to their respective peculiarities. The parable derives its material only from within the range of possibility and truth. Should the event which it sets before us be the merest fiction, it must, nevertheless, have so much ideal truth, that no objection can lie against it, and that the occurrence might have taken place in actual life.

The fable and the parable differ, moreover, as it regards the doctrine or truth, which they propose to exhibit, inasmuch as the parable has to do with religious truth only, while the former may take as its subject matters of experience and lessons of prudence. Pölitz, in his work on the 'General Circle of the German language,' thus describes the ideas fable, allegory, and parable, respectively: "The peculiarity of the fable lies in its bestowing a sensible form on human acts and circumstances, within the circle of instinct which is allied to human freedom. The allegory does not name the peculiar circumstance which is to be sensibly presented, but suffers it to be disclosed through a perfectly descriptive image; and it is a mere casualty, whether its subject is a rational truth or a moral principle. A parable is the representation of an action, which comprises in itself the sensible image of some higher truth of reason, or some principle of morals, under the unity of a complete æsthetic form. Therefore as the similitude grows out of metaphor, extended and made complete; so the parable springs from a similitude carried out in all its parts."

II. THE ANTIQUITY OF PARABLES.

With regard to these methods of communicating instruction, both the parable and the fable are observed in the earliest ages, and were common among the people of the east. In Judges, chap. ix. 8—15, we find the fable of the trees meeting to elect a king, which Jotham told to the men of Shechem, in order to evince to them their folly in having made so exceptionable a man as Abimelech their king. We also see examples of the parabolic method of teaching in the second book of Samuel, chap. xii. 1—7, where Nathan charges on David his sin against Uriah; and chap. xiv. 1. sqq., where the woman of Tekoah flies to David to make entreaty for Absalom.

III. THE RELATION OF THE PARABLE TO THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

In the parabolic mode of communication there is manifest, in general, a very subtile talent for observing the phenomena of nature and human life; a gentle sensibility and a soul finely

susceptible of feelings towards objects and truths of the world beyond sense; a heart of piety and love to God, ever prompt to apprehend the relation of temporal to eternal things; and, in fine, the capacity to select the form most appropriate for strikingly presenting the eternal truth, and to set forth what is common to the type and its anti-type—the truth above sense. The parable has for its end, to lead up from the known to the unknown, and to learn the nature and properties of the latter in that which is already attained; it joins the new to the ancient, and conducts from the seen to the unseen world, that it may by comparison invest the latter sensibly. The earthly becomes the image of the heavenly, the present of the future, the temporal of that which is eternal. By this means, the whole realm of nature becomes a picture of the realm of grace, and the parable shows that the same, or like, development obtains in one, as in the other; as, for example, that in the kingdom of spirits, as in nature, there are found gradual advances, seed time and harvest. Setting out with man's experience, it exhibits to us in this the recital principles of the Most High towards the collective race and towards each individual. It teaches us to conclude, that if even men, sinners, act in such and such a manner—are so full of love, so strong to render aid—much more will God, who is love itself, and at the same time the Almighty.

“The parable borrows materials from the endless wealth of nature and human life, and illustrates both, by using them to image forth the heavenly. “The sublime mental glance of Jesus,” (says Kleuker of our Lord's parables, in this view) chose manifold parabolic delineations of the kingdom of God, the sense of which resembles the grandeur of this kingdom. He spake to new senses, to the heart's vision and emotion, thinking and awakening by new figures, new images, copies of the living world.

“The circle of nature and history, the object of sense and observation gave sensible images for his conceptions, vessels for the bread of heaven, which eternally satisfies. All that is visible afforded him symbols of the invisible, for creatures who live and move, are born and reared among visible things.

“There must have necessarily been in Christ a depth of mind in the comprehension of the real and the actual, since he chose out of all possible methods, the parabolic form of fiction; which in his way of employing it, made it needful that he should at the same instant regard nature and history as in the most lively manner present and full of meaning.”

“The parable is the argument of arguments, applicable even by the man who is most narrowed down to sense, while the

greatest hero of abstraction must acknowledge, if he is not deficient in soul, that a single image full of power and meaning conveys in a moment more light, authority, impression and conviction of spiritual truths, than the most learned ratiocination. These parabolic similitudes are all so admirably appropriate, so deep, so high, so comprehensive, so inimitable, as to be within the reach of no mind but one (like that of Christ) comprehensive of time, men, and things. We might discuss a subject with reference to its end, object, cause, or effect, yet without ever making so complete an impression, as by such a parable."

Of the argumentative cogency of similitudes in this point of view, Tholuck says, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, chap. xv. "The force of the Parable, as proof, arises hence, that the author of the spiritual and the natural world is the same, and the same laws regulate the developments of both. The similitudes, therefore, which the Redeemer deduces from the realm of nature are not mere similitudes, serving for illustration; they are profound analogies, and nature thus becomes a testimony for the spiritual kingdom. Hence the principle was long since assumed, that whatever is in earth is also in heaven. Were it otherwise, those similitudes could have none of that force as arguments which they exert on every pure mind."

We learn, not only from the parables, but in general from the manifold imagery employed by Jesus, the view which he took of nature and human life, and the use which he made of both as richly instructive materials for embodying the sublime truths of his everlasting heavenly kingdom. Hunger and thirst become in his discourse the emblem of irrepressible longing for things above. He is himself the bread of life; he gives living water, and thus represents himself as the satisfier of all necessities of our immortal spirit, to all eternity. Bodily poverty images that which is spiritual, that is humility, or the feeling of our defects. Earthly treasures remind of heavenly, the better treasures of a pious heart and a good conscience. The mote and the beam indicate the hidden and the obvious fault. The strait gate and the narrow way bring within the scope of sense the manner in which the right path and the true door of eternal life are slighted by many, on account of their inconveniences. By the figure of the good tree bearing good fruit, he shows, that truly good words and works can proceed only from a good and a renewed heart. An extensive harvest field prefigures the joyful sight of multitudes of souls brought into the kingdom of heaven; and its being white unto the harvest denotes the blessed results of labouring for the Lord. The vipers' brood represents a false hypocritical race. He who does the will of God is regarded by the

Lord Jesus as his mother, his sister, his brother. The hand, the foot, the eye, which are diseased and must be resigned, teach us the duty of eradicating our dearest sinful propensities. The utter unfitness for the kingdom of heaven of the earthly soul which craves terrestrial good, is set before us by the camel which cannot go through the eye of a needle. As Christ bore the cross in actual suffering, so must we bear the cross of affliction for his sake. We recognise the moral corruption and the impending destruction of a people, in the figure, that where the carcase is, there the eagles are gathered together. The destroying of the temple is the image of his death, and the dying and fruit-bearing of the corn of wheat, teach how, in the case of Jesus himself, life must spring from death, and in the case of his people, the life of God in the soul from death to sin; also that the general law of development in his kingdom is, *life out of death*. Birth shadows forth a new-birth; the pains of parturition, the bitter conflict between the sinful and the divine life; the joy of a mother who has been delivered, the blessedness of a heart which has attained to new life in God. The enjoyment of food is the symbol of the refreshment and delight of the heart which works the works of God. To eat and drink the flesh and blood of the Son of man points to the full participation of his death by faith. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus calls himself the Resurrection, because the day is coming when he shall awaken all the dead. He is the only way which leads to heaven; without him there is no salvation. His death is a departure to the Father, and the death of his disciples an entrance into the mansions which he has prepared for us. He is the physician, and sinners are the sick; for sin and disease agree in being disorders, the one of the souls, the other of the bodies of men.

In the writings of the apostles, we likewise find an unlimited, rich, inexhaustible store of the noblest and aptest imagery. Paul delineates the intimate union of Christians in love, and for mutual assistance, by the figure of their being members of one body. Christ, as the head of the body, and his people, as members joined to the head, are closely bound to one another. In the view of this apostle, the Christian life is a race, and a conflict. Christians are Christ's soldiers. Teachers are husbandmen and builders. Self-conquest and self-denial are the bringing under and subduing of the body, and a dying daily. The ever-besetting sin is a thorn in the flesh. The victor's wreath, the crown of life and of righteousness, is to be bestowed on true disciples. He describes the entire spiritual panoply of the Christian battle; *Ephesians* vi. Peter represents everlasting happiness as a heavenly inheritance; calls Christians a holy priesthood; depicts

the common effort of all as the building of themselves into a spiritual house, and their service of God in spirit and in truth as a spiritual sacrifice. John likens the degrees of spiritual strength to the ages of human life, just as the Lord himself, in this respect, calls his disciples sheep and lambs. What wealth of figurative expression! Yet only a specimen is presented out of an abundance. To that one might justly say, that for the sacred exposition of the Gospel, in order to give it effect, and afford vivid impression to its eternal truths, we have such a fulness of figures, that there is scarcely any necessity for adding to their number. At least, it were discreet to learn from the simplicity and comprehensiveness of the scriptural imagery, how we should proceed in the adoption of new similitudes.

IV. THE REASON WHY THE PARABOLIC METHOD WAS EMPLOYED BY CHRIST.

Since every figurative expression has a degree of obscurity; and this is especially the case when the figure runs through a whole parable, while, at the same time, the true comprehension of the truth conveyed depends on this very thing; one might be disposed to inquire the motive of our Lord in using this mode so often in addressing hearers of the most various character, and to seek the reason why he did not always rather express himself in literal directness, especially as the latter style was powerful; for he taught not as the Pharisees and Scribes. This very question was indeed proposed by the disciples to their Master, in the words: "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matt. xiii. 10.) His answer is also recorded. (v. 11—17.)

The figurative and parabolic form of teaching, in general, was not unusual; and this may certainly have had a concurrent force as a motive for the use made of it by Jesus; yet we discover, especially in the reply to which we have alluded, more weighty reasons why he should open his mouth in parables. (Matt. xiii. 35.) Especially was he induced so to do, by the situation of his hearers at large; in point of mental discipline, and the degree of intellectual and moral culture in which they stood. It is true, they were by no means alike in capacity of mind and moral condition, but the difference was such as to render necessary this method of discourse, for various reasons in each particular case. The great mass of the people was highly rude and uncultivated; obtuse in their carnal mind, indifferent towards the chief concerns of man, and hence, proportionably unprepared for unfigured representations. The small number

who were more advanced in mind, that is, the disciples, were also trammelled by Jewish prejudices, and false conceptions of the kingdom to be established; unused spiritually to apprehend that which is spiritual, and far too weak with open face to behold all Gospel truths without a veil. And, finally, the Pharisees and Scribes, the Sadducees and Elders and priests of the people, inflated with the foolish arrogance that it was the prerogative of Israel to be God's people, jealous of the rising esteem of Jesus, and fraught with hatred, enmity, and plots against him, were hence unable to bear much of the truth. Consequently, our Lord delivered it to them in the guise of figure. Now, the hearers of Christ, whom he was to influence, being represented in the accounts of the Evangelists such as we have stated, if we take into view further the doctrines themselves which Jesus had to propose, we shall still more clearly see the fitness, nay, the necessity of the parabolic method. Certain doctrines, altogether peculiar to the Gospel, concerning the gradual unfolding of God's kingdom upon earth, and thus directly connected with the person and history of Jesus, could not be comprehended in their full extent and entire significancy, until the actual occurrence of the facts themselves on which they were founded. When our Lord, therefore, proposed to lay before his hearers these events and their results, there was no method left for effecting this, but the representation of these things by resemblances. This is particularly the case with respect to his death, and the ensuing events of the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the sending of the Spirit. Before the disciples of Jesus were illuminated by these events, and taught the nature of his kingdom, similitudes afforded the best means to prefigure these heavenly things to them, and convey their multiplicity of relations by manifold imagery.

Our Lord did indeed often discourse of his history in the directly literal manner, especially toward the end of his ministry; yet, plain as his words now seem to us, they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. (Luke xviii. 34.) If, even after his resurrection, their eyes were so holden, that, dazzled by earthly hopes of Messiah they could ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" they must have previously been still more inapt to discern the grand result of his death, the gathering of a holy Church, depending on Jesus in faith and love. (Acts i. 6.) And, as they did not comprehend the resurrection, though announced to them beforehand, they could still less be enlightened as to that power to vanquish and reform the world, which was in their risen Lord,

who purposed to form a new race by his word and Spirit. But when the Holy Ghost was given them by the Lord, who is himself the Spirit; when the Spirit led them into all truth, and brought all things which he had said to their remembrance; they began, indeed, to understand the similitudes and parables of their Master, in their profound import, and multiplicity of application; and especially then did the Holy Spirit communicate and reveal to them things to come. The covering fell, the veil was torn away, and divine, eternal truth became the perfect object of their contemplation.

“It was the object of Christ’s parables (says Kleuker, as already cited,) like the ancient prophetic pictures of his future life, to depict objects with precision as to their general import and intimate truth; yet, like the latter, still to leave behind a degree of obscurity, so that only they could enter into their spirit who made the search with entire truth of soul. Others discerned this not, and what they did discern, was turned into an offence to themselves and an occasion of opposing Christ.” What Paul says of all human knowledge of divine things is especially valid in regard to the parables; “now we see as through a glass darkly”—in an enigma—as an object is pictured in a mirror, and we there see its image, yet less clearly and distinctly than when we regard it without any such medium; so is the knowledge of divine objects, truths, and relations at present connected with the word, and effected by the word, until such time as we shall see all face to face. Now our Lord’s parables are truly a clear and pure mirror, in which he shows us the laws and regulations of his kingdom. Since the infirmity even of his disciples, who loved the truth, sought after it, and devoted themselves to it, led him to deliver it to them in a manner adapted to their comprehension, it was beyond question doubly necessary, when he faced his personal foes, who hated the truth, (and he was himself the truth) in such a manner to impart it to them, as that it might find its way to their closed and darkened hearts, without at the same time producing greater exacerbation. Jesus had truths to teach which were exceedingly offensive to the national pride of high-minded priests and scribes. He had expositions to make which could not but fire their hatred, and still more enrage them against himself, while they continued as they then were, averse to his demand, that they should repent, give ear, lay his warnings to heart, and comply with his gracious invitations and promises. In the very front rank of these truths stood that which related to their hardening; the prediction that they should go so far as to offer violence to his very life, and bring down on themselves the awful doom of God, according to which they,

and all who were like-minded, should be shut out from the blessings of Messiah's kingdom; and that the Gentiles should be called in their stead. Nothing can easily be imagined more likely than such a doctrine to irritate the Israelite's pride of birth; for he regarded himself as a son of Abraham, and as a favourite of God, irrespectively of his moral character; despised the Gentiles as dogs, and looked down upon them with insolent depreciation. It must be said to them, for a testimony against them; and in order to speak the truth with the utmost forbearance, and so as not unnecessarily to exasperate, or to contribute towards their sinning frowardly against the light, and aggravating their guilt, Jesus clothed these predictions of future things in similitudes; clear enough to him who wishes to hear and lay them to heart, yet on the other hand so obscured as to spare his adversaries. In this way alone is it either right or practicable to reveal the truth to its foes, presenting them with it folded in emblems, in order that they may receive it without offence. Its full light requires a healthy eye, and a heart that loves the truth. Where the eye is diseased, it is the part of love to spare even the wicked, in order that they may not turn against the truth. Often indeed did the enemies of our Lord suspect that he spoke of them; but as all was conveyed in parables, the sting which truth always bears against froward sinners, was blunted, while at the same time they could receive its saving efficacy if they would. "That he might not cast his pearls before swine (says Kleuker,) it was necessary that he should wrap them in the sacred garb of parabolic fiction; for this end he hallowed the parable as a casket for his jewels." Hence, as will appear from what has already been said, it is a remarkable property of the parable that at the same time it reveals and conceals the truth. It *reveals* it, for the veil is so transparent that one may easily discern what it covers; it *conceals* it, for he who looks only at the integument and shell, sees nothing of the kernel, yet receives the latter in the shell, so that at some other time he can enjoy it.

It has already been hinted that the condition of our Lord's hearers, and the nature of the truths to be proposed, afforded ample reasons for the use of the parabolic and figurative manner of instruction. To this we must add however, that other grounds are discovered in this method of instruction itself. There is nothing which so much charms us as history. Nothing more awakens our attention and interest than the conduct and fortunes of our fellow men; and are not parables for the most part narratives from human life? It is because the Bible contains so much narrative, that it is so fascinating and instructive. And as God proposes to educate and train us by the histories comprised in

his revelation, and as his fostering grace is represented to us in the lives of sinners, who form the subject of the Old and New Testament; so the parables of Christ are histories of the divine economy with respect to us. The Son, therefore, like the Father, will in the same historical manner teach and enable us. For history, and brief narratives, the dullest have attention; they awaken the interest of the most unfeeling. He who, in his levity and folly, closes ear and heart against doctrine, admonition, threatening, and expostulation, gives willing heed to the narrative, and the seed of divine wisdom accompanies the recital to his heart. Though all the parables are not of this kind, they are all lovely pictures. In their figurative character, they are recognised at once by the introduction, *The kingdom of God is like, &c*; and at the same moment are awakened curiosity, or, in deeper minds, the thirst for knowledge, and thereupon reflection and earnest inquiry, as to what the import of the emblem may be. Are not the parables, then, on this very account, adapted to be used in instruction? Were nothing more effected, in the first instance, by this form of teaching, than its easy yet deep impression on the memory, it were a great point gained, and should serve to recommend their use. But the figurative language of the Lord comprises in it everlasting truth, and there consequently resides in it a living power, which, if duly regarded, will develop itself to the illumination of the understanding, the ennobling of the soul, the sanctification of the will, and the salvation of the whole man.

That the determination of Jesus as a wise instructor was in accordance with the nature of the truth proposed, and the adapt- edness of the figurative and parabolic style to convey it, we learn from the consideration of what he said to his twelve disciples, and the others who were around him, and who joined in asking the explanation of the parable of the sower. (Mark iv. 10.) According to the account of Matthew (chap. xiii. 10,) the question was, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" For it surprised them to hear the Lord speak thus; since if they, his confidential disciples, had not understood the meaning of the similitude, they very naturally inferred that the great mass of the people would still less comprehend it; and thus the blessings of his instruction were lost, and his profitable end frustrated. To this objection of his disciples, Christ replies, in order to remove their doubt concerning the appropriate use of the parable in this case: "It is given UNTO YOU to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (v. 11.) Here our Lord distinguishes between his hearers. He says UNTO YOU—that is, all of you, who are athirst for salvation, who are willing

to know truth and seek for further instruction—to you it is given; ye evince, by this very direction of your will towards divine truth, your capacity for still further revelations. But whosoever, as is the case with many, is earthly-minded, and has little or no regard for heavenly things, reveals thereby such an incapacity of heart for further teaching, that to him the mysteries of the kingdom of God cannot be explained and imparted; in pursuance of that righteous sentence, that the benefit neither can nor shall be forced upon him who contemns it. (Luke xiv. 24.) The expression of the eleventh verse is still further elucidated by Jesus in the twelfth, which contains a general principle of divine and human experience, with regard to the faithful and the unfaithful. “Whosoever hath,” says he, “to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” In other words: In this concern, it fares with my hearers in conformity to the principle, that he who regards the offered salvation with desire, and love, and sincerity, shall have more grace given him, through deeper perception, and he shall become rich in every kind of wisdom and experience; but he who thinks not the proffered grace, especially the truth and doctrine here announced, worthy of more consideration and careful reflection, shall sooner or later lose all, and the word to which he has listened shall again vanish from his recollection. And it is further said in the thirteenth verse: “Therefore speak I to them in parables;” *therefore*, because the lessons so often taught them heretofore in direct discourse have been so fruitless, therefore will I search for images and similitudes, if by these I may charm them into reflection, and move them to care for their salvation. In the following words of the same verse, Christ depicts the lamentable state of soul in many of his hearers; their stupid apathy, their careless indifference and unconcern about eternal life: “because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.” In other words: They understand not my instructions, for notwithstanding their natural capacity, and in addition to this the opportunity of seeing and hearing and consequently of understanding the truth, which God has given them by me; they nevertheless, by reason of their spiritual sloth, make no use of their mental faculties, and put forth no effort; and the natural and unavoidable consequence is, that they remain unenlightened. Jesus corroborates this experimental truth by a sentence of Isaiah (chap. vi. 9, 10,) which applied as well to those who then heard our Lord, as to the contemporaries of the prophet. It is applicable to many hearers of the divine word in every age; for the same causes always have the same effects,

as well in the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature; because in both every thing is developed according to divine laws; in the latter conformably to irresistible necessity, but in the former to a necessity indeed, but such a one as is different; inasmuch as man, by virtue of his still remaining liberty, accepts or rejects God's assistance. The words of Isaiah, therefore, which contain at once the history of the past, and the history of the future, or prophecy, have this import: By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive, thus it fares with all obtuse hearers. The hidden ground of this fruitless hearing and seeing lies in the words of the prophet which follow: for this people's heart is waxed gross (has become unsusceptible) and their ears are dull of hearing (they are not willing to hear or to lay to heart what contravenes their desires) and their eyes *slumber (they have caused them to slumber, closed them, so as not to see;) and the mournful effect of such a turning of heart from the truth, while received by the outward ear, according to the prophet, is, "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The hardening and rejection of Israel, and of inconsiderate persons, ensues, not by an unconditional decree of God, but judically, penally, and as a natural consequence. As they desire not the light, they abide in darkness. As they contemn the physician and his aid, they consequently die in their sins; and as they will not repent, the wages of their sin is death.

After this indication of one class of his hearers, Christ adverts to the other, which comprised his disciples and those who were like-minded. (Mark iv. 10.) To these he said: (Matt. xiii. 6,) "but blessed are your eyes, for they see," (which we may take literally as well as spiritually,) and your ears (of body and of soul,) for they hear," inasmuch as ye are anxious to understand.

The parabolic and figurative form of instruction serves therefore to bring the truth home to each individual, and it was the manifest intention of Jesus that the hidden seed of divine truth should be found by all. This intention it is easy to discover in the words which he added when, in compliance with the wish of his disciples, he had explained the parable of the sower, (Luke viii. 16, 17.) "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For

* The German version is here followed. The English needs less elucidation.

nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad." Now, if we consider, in this connexion, those other words of Jesus, (Matt. x. 27.) "What I tell you in darkness, (in hidden and secret instruction,) that speak ye in the light, (publicly and before every body); and what ye hear in the ear, (privately), that preach ye upon the house-tops," in public places, so that all the world may hear it; we at once perceive that the once hidden mysteries shall, at a later period, be generally revealed. Hence there is no reference here to any such secret doctrine of Christianity as all might not be permitted to know, for he who is the Light of the world, is willing to enlighten all men.

V. THE PERFECTION OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES.

If we direct our attention to the beauty of our Lord's parables, we find them, even in this respect, perfect and inimitable models, apples of gold in vessels of silver. In the loveliest form they present instruction the weightiest, the richest in consolation, and the most conducive to happiness. Here there is nothing superfluous, nothing otiose. These little pictures are displayed before our eyes in the noblest diction, with the liveliest colours, and in the aptest arrangement. They contain neither more nor less than is precisely necessary, to elucidate and prove the proposed thought. All is brought home to sense by the strongest contrasts. Each person is drawn with the utmost penetration, according to his characteristics. A single attentive perusal of these similitudes is sufficient to show us their beauty; but the longer and the more carefully we are employed upon them, observing each particular, and viewing the whole in every light, the more are we filled with wonder and admiration at the elegance of their form and their contents. To my mind they always occur under the figure of a lovely casket, tasteful in its form, wrought of the richest material, and furnished with simple but costly decorations; but when the key is handed to us, and we unlock what was closed, and see the gems and jewels within, they surpass all calculation, and we cannot be sated with looking at their splendour. But, attractive as is the form of our Saviour's parables, and strong as is the inducement which they hold out to consider their poetic beauty, the truth which they contain is more glorious still, for it is saving truth, "the truth of which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life."

With reference to this subject we may say what Luther does with regard to the Scriptures at large: that it is a garden of God with many a lovely tree laden with lordly fruit, and that often

as he had shaken the boughs, and received the delicious fruit into his bosom, yet had he ever found again new fruit when he had searched and shaken them anew. This is especially true of the similitudes of Scripture which comprise inexhaustible treasures of doctrine, comfort, warning, and encouragement. In meaning, they are as rich as a sea, and there is none who hath learned them all. Each new observation shows us new charms, gives new expositions, sheds new light upon the concerns of the divine kingdom. Every reader, cultivated and uncultivated, erudite and youthful, will understand some part of a parable, though the sharp eye sees more than the dull. They are simple enough for the simple, and deep enough for the deepest thinker; they are, like the whole Bible, a stream through which a lamb may wade, yet deep enough for an elephant.

VI. THE CONTENTS OF THE PARABLES.

The words by which many of the parables are introduced—*the kingdom of heaven is like*—intimates to us their drift, and the theme which they illustrate; yet even those parables which are not thus introduced, treat, like the former, of the kingdom of God, in its manifold relations. The words of the Psalmist, (Ps. lxxviii. 2,) “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world,” are applied to Jesus, (Matt. xiii. 35,) and teach us, that our Lord in his parables communicates interpretations concerning the nature, the design, and the extent of his kingdom, and also of its citizens; and that the eternal counsels of God respecting the salvation of men are therein revealed. It is true, they all have the most exact reference to his contemporaries, and circumstances, and to the events then occurring; they are, in most cases, delivered incidentally, to give direction or instruction in special cases; yet they are at the same time universal, and hence, eternally valid. For though in the time of Christ, as at all times, human nature certainly revealed its deepest peculiarities only in such definite forms as were agreeable to the age and the people, yet the Searcher of hearts always took into view what was universal and abiding, and gave this direction to his instructions. Hence, the parables go far beyond what is peculiar to a single age, or place, or people, always displaying to view particulars in generals, transitory things in those which are enduring and ever-recurring. The kingdom of heaven, which constitutes the subject of the parables, is God’s institution of grace and salvation, for the redemption of sinners. As this institution is an eternal counsel of God’s compassionate

and fatherly love, it is called *the kingdom of God*; and, as it was established in the fulness of time, by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it is also called *the kingdom of Jesus Christ*. Deceed from all eternity, it was promised to our first parents immediately after the fall, and subsequently announced and described in various ways by all the prophets. This kingdom of grace, originally limited to Israel only, was nevertheless afterwards, in its progressive developement, to extend itself to all men, as it is conformable to the love of God, who wills that health should be extended to all, and conformable to the wants of men, who are all sinners, needing redemption and eternal happiness, but incapable of procuring it for themselves. The highest and ultimate object of the kingdom of heaven is communion with God through Jesus Christ, including felicity beginning in time and enduring to all eternity. This idea of communion with God, must be borne in mind as the essential point in all parables, though they also treat of this communion or kingdom with a great variety of comprehension. For sometimes, as in the parable of the sower, the theme is the means whereby such communion is brought about, that is the word of God; sometimes, as in the parables of the treasure and the pearl, its value; sometimes, as in the parable of the tares and wheat, the communion already effected, and viewed as it appears in time, as the Church or Christian society; then again, as in the similitude of the mustard seed, its progress of developement; and finally, in very many parables, the condition of heart and destiny of those who shall belong, or do belong to this community. The essential subject of all Christ's parables is the kingdom of God, existing as the Church, viewed as to its past and future fortunes, in time and eternity. "What (says Draceseke) is it that we Christians call the kingdom of heaven? Sometimes that blessedness to which the Church will lead. Sometimes the Church, which will lead thither. But always communion of souls who seek and find salvation in God through Christ. Whether this communion be regarded in a single soul, or in numbers, as a whole, bound together by their salvation, the case is not altered. Wherever souls seek and find salvation in God through Christ, there is the kingdom of heaven."

VII. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES.

As it regards the principles which we should follow in explaining, and practically handling our Lord's parables, there are the greatest varieties of sentiment and contradictory opinions, among those who have commented on them. In this, as in all other expo-

sition of Scripture, the application of the subject to one's own heart is an essential pre-requisite to the deep and intimate comprehension of its import. By such a self-application, we often learn, of a sudden, what lay hidden from the delving intellect. The *DE TE FIT SERMO* is therefore to be laid to heart, as well by the scientific expositor as the practical commentator. It was not until Nathan uttered to David his *THOU ART THE MAN!* that the latter received full light as to the Prophet's parable; and so it is even now. The true practical direction which is aimed at by such a mode of treatment, is the most effectual preventive of an erroneous allegorical interpretation, which is more or less arbitrary, and proportionately incorrect;—a rock on which many of the ancient expositors of parables have split. And here therefore holds true the saying of Luther: "*The literal sense—that is the thing! Therein is instruction, strength, life, and art.*"*

By this practical direction also, we are guarded against yielding ourselves to the sport and caprice of an unbridled and irregular fancy, and are reminded that both the parable and its interpretation must be profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; that they are both intended to train us up to salvation, through faith in Christ.

We may further lay it down in general as a rule for the profitable use of imagery whether in parables or not, that we should first of all make clear the image itself which serves to embody the truth beyond sense, viewing it in its primary signification, in all its relations, without reference to the secondary import, and then transfer it to the more exalted field, in order to define the nature of that which the emblem denotes. For example, Jesus calls his disciples the salt of the earth. What are we to understand by this? Salt is savoury itself, and makes other things savoury; it cleanses and preserves from corruption. The disciples of Christ must be like salt, in reference to the world. They are themselves savoury, and lovely; in them are found the noblest properties of heart, inasmuch as they are pervaded by the Gospel, by the Spirit of Christ; and with respect to others, with whom they come in contact, and who yield to their influence, they are likewise beneficial in their agency, since by the operation of their spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, they cleanse them from sin, render them well pleasing to God and men, preserve them from moral putrefaction and utter sinking into sin and death, and also help them towards eternal life. By

* "*Sensus literalis*: der thuts, da ist Lehre, Kraft, Leben, und Kunst innen."

treating it in this manner, we arrive at the point of resemblance, the *tertium comparationis*, and discover in every figure a rich treasure of truth.

We observe that every parable is a whole, compounded of various subordinate images; and hence arises a question, which has received very different answers: whether every single minute touch of the picture is to be interpreted, or not? All agree, that in the parable, as a complete picture, every feature is important, gives greater distinctness to the characters of the persons represented as acting, renders the subject more striking, and hence must be used by a kind of necessity, since without these subordinate lines, the picture cannot be complete. But many are of the opinion, that much in the parables serves only for poetic ornament, is introduced by a mere aesthetic necessity, and in the reddition of the similitude needs not to be noticed and demands no interpretation, as it answers to no anti-type. Many interpreters of the parables may have been led to this opinion by the fact, which cannot be denied, that the particulars of some have been expounded with a puerile caprice, and that while too much has been made of these particulars, the great scope has been neglected or mistaken; a fault certainly meriting rebuke. But the opinion that many things in our Lord's parables serve for mere decoration is untenable; as may appear from the circumstance, that different interpreters fix on very different things in the same parable, as essential and unessential; so that if we unite various expositions we shall find—that as one makes this point, and another that point, the all-important one—that every particular part is all-important and unimportant by turns. Now as the last conclusion involves an impossibility, the supposition is most correct, that nothing is altogether superfluous, nothing an empty insignificant ornament, and that to every line in the type, there is something correspondent in the anti-type, when explained. In saying this, however, it is by no means intended, that with scrupulous solicitude a significance should be imposed on every word; there is a great difference between the meaning of single words and that of single figurative traits in a parable, as every figurative word does not of itself constitute a trait of the parabolic picture. But the more we cling to generalities, and neglect the individual images, the more do the life and charm of the similitude vanish, while under the converse method of explanation the interest rises, and the beauty and justice of the parable are increasingly brought to view.

In the "Biblical Commentary" upon the Scriptures of the

New Testament," Olshausen thus expresses himself, upon the interpretation of the parables: "The parable of the sower is one of the few of which we have an authentic exposition by our Lord himself; such as is highly important, not merely for the understanding of this single narrative, but for the derivation of the principles upon which all parables are to be interpreted. In particular, we gain instruction from it on a point which is usually most difficult in the interpretation of parables, namely, how far the individual lines of parabolic diction are significant or the reverse. While a superficial mind can reduce to triteness all the deep things of the word of God, by saying, 'this or that is mere ornament,' superstition can erect every grain of sand into a mountain. The same Spirit who framed, must also interpret the parables, and then the golden mean will be observed."

Again: "How far particular traits in the parable are significant, must always give room for hesitation; yet from the parables of Christ, which set before the eye a rich object of contemplation, we may derive it as a general canon, not readily to overlook any feature, unless by observing it we confuse the entire picture." Page 600.

And again, in remarking on the similitude of the wicked husbandmen: "Here, as in the case of parables in general, it is difficult to determine with certainty how far the minute particulars are to be carried out in application. We cannot draw a line of exact demarcation here, since the interpreter's perspicacity in discerning remote relations depends on the degree of his interior development in spiritual life. Still, reverence for our Lord's words directs naturally to as punctual a use of every particular as is possible, because the completeness of the parable is dependent on the fulness of the allusions which are embodied in it." Page 787. And on the parable of the wedding garment, the same author observes: "Indeed, we must in short, admit, that these points, (the garment, &c.) must not be pressed, yet they stand in such intimate relation to the entire parable that the whole representation becomes void if these particulars are separated as merely incidental." Page 799. On the parable of the ten virgins, he says, finally: "The question arises, to what extent we should cling to the minor features of the representation. The only definite rule must be sought in the natural suitability of the allusion; and this, when used without violence, communicates to this parable a fulness of interesting application, which renders it one of the most beautiful in the Gospel. For the more points of resemblance there are naturally and easily presented by a parable, the richer must we regard it." Page 910.

When a parable is to be explained and applied, the first thing to be done is to study its connexion with the foregoing and following context, and with reference to this, to seize upon the leading idea. It is impossible to arrive at the signification of the details, until this kernel and central point of the parable is discovered by repeated and assiduous consideration of the circumstances and contents, and is set forth with all possible precision and distinctness; for it is only from this central point that all the rest is viewed in its true light. A parable, as a whole, may be compared to a circle, of which the spiritual doctrine or truth is the centre, while the minute figurative points of the representation are the radii. To one who is not placed at the centre, the circumference itself is not seen in its perfectly circular figure, nor are the radii viewed as all tending to the midst, and there standing in beautiful unity: but all this takes place when the eye beholds the whole from the centre. So it is in the parable. When we have seen its central point, or leading truth, in full light, we also discern clearly the reference and true import of its details, and press the latter, only so far as thereby more fully to illustrate the leading truth. The most difficult point, yet one which is indispensable, is, certainly, the discovery of this principal idea. For, in every parable, we meet with a great number of individual truths which might very readily be regarded as of equal moment; yet upon mature consideration, there is always one which comes forward before the rest in strong relief, and in the brightest light, while the others retire into shade. The latter serve only to define more precisely, and to illuminate from every side, that cardinal truth which is the central point.

When it is intended to expound a parable for popular edification, this object will certainly be most fully attained, so far as the hearers are concerned, by treating it in a *single* discourse. The dismembering of a parable into a number of treatises never fails to injure the general impression; and though many fine things may be said, yet the unity and compass of the leading thought is lost in the inordinate spinning out of the detail. In such a case, a parable is used rather as a treasury of texts, and this is certainly allowable: only let it not be done under the pretext of treating and expounding the parable, as a whole, and with reference to its peculiar character.