

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND.

MATTH. xii. 10; MARK iii. 1; LUKE vi. 6.

THE three Evangelists who record this miracle, agree in the statement that the man's *hand* was withered: Luke adding that it was his *right* hand. The word used in the three passages cited, is *cheir*; occurring very frequently (178 times) in the New Testament, and always rendered *hand*. It is true, that it is said to signify also the *arm*, in classic Greek, and *Herod.* ii. 121,

is given as an example. But the phraseology there is, "He cut off the arm near the shoulder" (*apotamonta en tooi oomooi teen cheira*); and the story goes to show, that the robber wishing to use the hand in a certain trick, he could not do it unless by having the entire arm.

But there is no qualifying word in our passages, to indicate that the hand was withered up to the shoulder, *eis ton oomon*; and so the withering involved the entire arm; while in no other passage of the New Testament does *cheir* signify *arm*.

The Greeks had several words wherewith to designate the *arm*:—*oolenee*, *agkalee*, *orguia*, *brachioon*, *peeelus*; of which the *first* is not used in the New Testament; the *third* is used as a measure, *fathom*, twice; the *fifth* as a measure, *cubit*, four times; the second in the plural only, *arms*, once; the fourth, *arm*, three times.

If the Evangelist meant that the *arm* was withered, why did he use the word *cheir*, which generally means *hand*? The arm includes the hand; but not the hand the arm. The hand includes the fingers; but not the fingers the hand. The most natural meaning of the passages is, that the hand, and not the arm, was withered.

Then as the power to hold forth the hand is in the arm, the man was quite able to hold forth his hand at our Lord's bidding. The hand, if withered or crushed, can be raised by the healthy arm; but without the arm, the hand cannot rise. The Saviour's power is not in question; to restore vitality to a hand, an arm, or the whole man, was no hard task for Him, the omnipotent; the only question is the facts of the miracle.

The narrative indicates that our Lord guarded against the misrepresentations of His malicious adversaries. When the man whose sight had been restored, was brought to the Pharisees, they doubted the facts in his case. But no one present in the assembly could doubt this miracle. Our Lord called him forth into the midst;

and while the man was standing there, a discussion of the propriety of healing on the Sabbath, allowed them all to see the man's condition; especially when ordered to hold forth his withered hand in full view of them all; and as they gazed upon the withered, useless hand, lo! it was instantly restored whole as the other.

They were angry, but they could not deny the miracle. Themselves saw the withered hand, held forth into public view, swell out into its proper proportions and availability.

This understanding of the text seems to be the most natural, because it is the most conformed to the phraseology of the Evangelists. Blessed are they who, like this man, obey the injunction of the Saviour.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

MATTH. xii. 31; MARK iji. 29; LUKE xii. 10; I JOHN v. 16.

ALL agree that this is a very difficult passage. Some have thought the passage teaches the forgiveness of sins in another world, after death, between death and the judgment—*i. e.*, the forgiveness of other sins than those against the Holy Ghost. But it is very improper to found such a doctrine, so contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, upon an obscure passage: although its obscurity is not on this point: the expressions "this world," "the world to come" (*en toutooi tooi aiooni oute en tooi mellonti*), were commonly understood in that day as referring to DISPENSATIONS, AGES.

The then existing age was the Mosaic; the age to come was the Messianic. In the Mosaic age blasphemy was a capital, unpardonable offense: “* * * he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord (JEHOVAH), he shall surely be put to death,” etc. *Levit. xxiv. 16.* In the age to come, the Messianic, it is to be the same; Jehovah shall not be blasphemed. To speak against Moses, the leader of the dispensation, the divine agent, the mouth-piece of Jehovah, was pardonable; and so “* * * whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man (Jesus, the leader of the dispensation, the divine agent, the mouth-piece of Jehovah, the one raised to be like Moses), it shall be forgiven him.” But to blaspheme Jehovah, the Holy Ghost, was not pardonable in the Mosaic, the then existing dispensation, the “this age” of that day: nor, was it to be pardonable in the Messianic, the then coming age. Jehovah was the same in any age; and alike supreme.

It is remarkable that the Pharisees had declared the work of the Divine One to be the work of Beelzebub; perhaps they really thought so, but our Lord demonstrated their error, and we have no further allusion to the offense.

One most important thought is, that if any one, no matter how sinful and guilty, is penitent, it demonstrates the presence and aid of the Holy Ghost; who has softened the heart, opened the ear, and is calling the guilty one's attention to the Gospel, that he may believe and live. He who is sorry for sin; sincerely desires salvation; comes humbly to Jesus, the compassionate, almighty Saviour; has not committed the unpardonable sin; but is within the compass of the precious, all-encouraging declaration, “* * * HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT” (*ou mee ek-baloo exoo*). *John vi. 37.* The Greek fully requires the strength of the English expression, the *ou mee* being

intensive, and used with reference to what *in no wise* will or should take place. *Winer.*

Were the sinner abandoned by the Holy Ghost, his sins would give him pleasure, not pain. Therefore, distress for sin, is a proof of the presence of the Blessed One, who convicts us of sin that he may persuade us to approach the Saviour. Jesus had a sorrowful way to the cross; and the sinner drops his tears as he goes there to find Him: but his tears always gleam in the light of the merciful, loving eye that gladly watches his approach.

WHY DID CHRIST USE PARABLES?

MATTH. xiii. 10.—Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?

A PARABLE is “the narrative of a fictitious, but common and natural occurrence, for the purpose of embodying and illustrating some doctrine.” *Meyer.* To teach by parable, seems to have been popular among the Jews. Our Lord adopted this method, and the disciples asked Him WHY?

It is probable, that but for His answer to this question, we of this day would have no special interest in the matter: but, as He might appear to intimate, that His object was to prevent the masses of the people from understanding Him, we are at a loss to conceive why He spoke to them at all.

After reading the connection, and the parallel passages, one might conclude that our Lord did desire to be understood; but as the people were excitable, rash, and disposed to tumult, great caution and prudence were

used by Him, to prevent any tumultuous and revolutionary proceedings. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." *Isai.* xlii. 2. Not with tumult, battle and slaughter was the Messiah to win His throne; but by His own suffering, and the utterance of the truth.

Therefore, in those wonderful parables, there was enough to excite attention and inquiry. Then, if any *inquired* of Him, He explained; though still speaking only as they were able to bear it. Even at the close of His wonderful earthly mission, He said to the very apostles as they sat around Him:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them *now*." *John* xvi. 12. Mark informs us that, "With many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it" (*kathoos eedunanto akouein*). *Mark* iv. 33.

We conclude, then, that the use of parables by our Lord, was a measure of prudence, promotive of the real good of His ignorant, excitable auditors; and in the proper spirit of His work, that He might incite them to thought, inquiry, and saving instruction. So far from His seeking to conceal the way of life from any one, He was ever ready to receive the sincere inquirer; while His sorrowing complaint against the masses, was:—"Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." *John* v. 40. He wept at the fact that such things were hidden from them, by their own obstinate perversity. *Luke* xix. 42.

The case of Nicodemus is illustrative. His attention had been attracted, although, as a leading Pharisee, his mind was bewildered by the traditions of the elders. He caught a glimpse of the truth, and desiring to know it fully, he came to our Lord, and was very kindly received; while instead of casting obstructions in his way, He sought carefully to remove every hindrance from his perception; and by a long, patient exposition, taught

him the true nature and design of the Messiah's work ; as being not the destruction of men, but their salvation.

Why did He speak to them in parables? Because it was the kindest, most efficient method. They had got into a condition that rendered such a plan necessary, to one who came not to destroy, but to save.

With reference to the remarkable expression (verse 12), "For whosoever hath, 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:" it may be understood upon the principle already suggested. For any one hearing a parable, not understanding it, but incited to sufficient interest in it to think of it, inquire into it—such a person "hath;" the parable has not left him as poor as it found him; for he now has an interest in the subject, that will lead him to inquire, and then more will be given him—*i. e.*, an explanation will be given, so that he will understand the parable, which was his desire, and therefore "he shall have more abundance." But he that heareth the words of the parable, neither understanding it nor feeling any interest in it, so as to think or inquire about it; indeed, has not any benefit from the parable whatever; though he momentarily hath the words, the terms, of the parable, and time and his negligence will soon take away this "that he hath," the words of the parable: a common law, that an unstudied, unthought of, unimproved lecture soon fades out of the memory.

The same expression is seen in at least four other places, and in each has the same significance; that one who has gained something upon opportunity, is he who *hath*; he who has gained nothing upon opportunity, loses the opportunity itself: he had that, gained nothing by it, and had it taken away from him. For example, in *Matth. xxv. 14-30*, we have our principle illustrated by a parable. A man about to go abroad, called his

servants and delivered unto them, according to their several ability, a portion of his capital to be employed in trade. These were servants (*douloi*), but their interest and comfort depended so much upon the prosperity of the master, that his interest was their interest. At his return, he called them to a reckoning, and he who had received five talents brought other five, reporting them to be the profit resulting from his management. His fidelity was commended, he was advanced in his position, and became a sharer of his lord's prosperity. Then came the man who had received two talents, also reporting other two talents profit, likewise a hundred per cent. on his capital; meeting with the same commendation and promotion, a sharer in his lord's prosperity. At last came the servant who had received one talent; bringing no profit; for he had taken no interest in the matter, and had been idle; the talent having been hid in the earth. As to gain, profit, he "hath not:" as to what "he hath," it was the unemployed talent, and that was taken away from him. He had an opportunity; did not improve it; lost it. His lord was the loser by his servant's idleness, and the servant was a sharer in the sorrow. A lesson that employees would do well to study. The joy or sorrow of the employer, is entered into by the employees. His prosperity is their prosperity: his adversity is their adversity. There is no getting rid of that law. Young men in employment should think of this. If they make no gain for their patron, they must soon lose what they have—their place. No man can go on with an unprofitable business.

But it is spiritually that we are to study the case: and it may be illustrated by the hearers of sermons. One hears, is interested, inquires, and has more abundance. Another hears, is not interested, does not inquire, and the sermon, the very text, is gone. He had no profit from the sermon; but he had the sermon, and now that is taken away.

The parable was spoken, to declare the truth prudently, not openly, for the condition of the people would not allow that: and to every one who had an interest excited in him to know more fully, he had but to ask and receive. The parable was to help men into the Kingdom; not to prevent them from entering.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

MATTH. xv. 21-28.

THE key to the proper understanding of this incident is this:—The disciples, in common with their countrymen, were miserably warped by their traditions, in their apprehension of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. He was, to them, the Messiah of the Jews; a Saviour from the power of the Gentiles, who would have no benefit of His reign, but by becoming Jews. A Saviour of all men, as men; a Saviour from sin; was beyond their comprehension. Throughout this incident, our Lord, who was constantly endeavoring to instill proper views of Himself into their minds, proceeds as illustrating the error of their ideas of His character and functions.

The poor woman, a heathen, coming out from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, approached him with the piteous wail, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil! Poor mother! What a plea! But as the Messiah was for the Jews only, what interest had *He* in this case? The woman was a Gentile: she had no claim upon Him:

her wretchedness was, of course, great; but she was a woman, only; a human being, but not a Jew: He was the Messiah of the Jews only. So, perhaps with a side glance at the disciples, “* * * he answered her not a word.” Not a word? Had their kind, benevolent Master cooled in his regards for the miserable; had his heart become callous to human woe? It was strange, indeed. The wail of the anguished mother penetrated their hearts, although she was a heathen; but it seemed to have no effect upon their Lord. He took no notice of her. He treated her according to their own ideas of the Gentile interest in their Messiah. But, as our Lord foresaw, the human was too strong for the Jew: they actually INTERCEDE for the heathen outcast. They BESOUGHT him, saying, “Send her away; for she CRIETH after us.” That is, grant her request; her cry of wretchedness overcomes us. If they merely desired her dismissal, to get rid of her noise, it would have been a light task for twelve men to drive off one lonely woman. It is by far more likely, that they were touched by her misery, and had been brought by their Master’s wise method to request him to violate their own principles. But they were not yet sufficiently probed: and still taking no notice of the woman, he answers *them*; and such an answer! “I am not sent but unto THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL!” The woman’s misery and despair were nothing to the Messiah of the *Jews*. Why should they trouble themselves and him, with the anguish of a heathen?

So, the woman finding her advocates of no avail, “came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” But he answered, perhaps still with a side look at his disciples, and in the spirit of their error; though, at the same time, so as to shape the conversation to his purpose; “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” The very essence, this, of the

Jewish view of the Messianic kingdom. And these mistaken Jews, his disciples, heard it! and, more, they heard the woman's *contradiction*, she was wiser than they; although they were Jews, and she but a heathen.

The figure used by our Lord, is a man sitting at table, with his children, and a cur or two in waiting. So, when he says, as a Pharisee, the bread has been provided for the children; it is not proper to take of it to cast to dogs; she flatly **CONTRADICTS** him, saying, "Yes, Lord; for the curs eat of the crumbs (morsels), that fall from their master's table." The actual truth in the case. The man's children; but, also, the man's curs; and many a scrap is thrown to them by both master and children; neither party regretting that the curs, the pets, had a share of the children's bread: indeed, more likely the children would have murmured, had the curs been refused a portion.

If it seem bold, that the woman should contradict our Lord; the language of the Evangelist requires such a rendering: *nai kurie*, Yes, Lord; *kai gar* for also, *ta kunaria*, the dogs, etc. Our version's "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs," etc., does not fairly express the words of the passage. Our Lord says, "It is not meet," etc.; while the woman replies, "Yes, Lord; for also (*kai gar*) the dogs eat," etc. There is no question about *nai*, it means yes: and might be rendered *truth*, in the sense of assent to our Lord's statement, that it was not proper for the dogs to partake of the children's bread: but, in such case, it would not be followed by *kai gar*, a phrase never translated, *yet*, except here, and in the parallel passage in Mark, in the New Testament, or in any Greek literature: its weakest sense equalling the Latin **ETENIM**, *for, and for*, etc., while it frequently has the greater force of **NAM ETIAM**, *for even*, etc.: as in *Acts* xix. 40, where the town clerk, in his strictures upon the tumultuous proceedings of the Ephesians, affirms that their dis-

putes should be settled in a lawful assembly: adding, "For (*kai gar*) we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar," etc. It is quite evident, that *kai gar*, here, might be rendered by our phrase, "for really," "in fact, "for the fact is:" either of which would express the sense of Luke's *kai gar*; while *yet* would be absurd. So in *Rom. xi. 1*, "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For (*kai gar*) I also am an Israelite," etc. Here the word "also" renders *kai*; and "for," *gar*: and the sense of Paul is well expressed: which would not be the case were *kai gar* rendered *yet*. Again, *Rom. xv. 2, 3*, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even (*kai gar*) Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." The word "for" represents *gar*; "even," *kai*. Were the words rendered by *yet*, the sense would not be given; *yet* would be quite unmeaning; while *for even* is very strong and expressive. We may well try to give up self for the benefit of our neighbor; *for even* Christ hath given us the example!

Therefore, we accept the hypothesis, that when our Lord put the statement in pharisaic form, that the dogs were excluded from participation in the family provision; she, wiser than the Pharisees, saw the error, contradicted the statement, and looked for her portion. Her intelligent faith was highly approved: not her *humility*, but her *faith*: not that she was willing to rank with dogs; but she had that clear, bold, all attempting faith, that induced her to venture a contradiction of what appeared to her to be the statement of him, upon whom the restoration of her unhappy daughter depended. When she had exhibited a faith so superior to that of the Jew, this poor Gentile came in for her share, in the benefactions of the Head of the family. The need of the Messiah was not restricted to the Jew: nor a proper

appreciation of him : nor a willingness to receive him. Salvation from sin is the need of every one ; and provision is made for every one.

Our Lord had no intention, from the first, to neglect or deny the Canaanite. Nor was he seeking to try *her* faith. He knew her heart ; sympathized with her grief ; intended to bless her in granting her plea : but, those disciples who were to proclaim him to mankind, had very distorted views of his nature, functions, and character ; and he took occasion to teach them, by this incident, to widen and deepen their Christology. In substance, he said to the heathen, You are right, O woman : the One Father has remembered all ; provided for all : the One Saviour, by the grace of God, is to taste death for every man : the Gospel is to be sent to all : so come in and take, not a scrap, a crumb, a morsel ; but as much as thou wilt : great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even AS THOU WILT.

Upon the hypothesis that she *assented* to his statement, that it was NOT proper for the dogs to partake of the bread ; then, unless *kai gar* be rendered *yet*, or *but*, which is doing violence to the language, and without countenance from any other passage, the woman would be supporting her assent, by showing that she should not have given it : for she points to the well known fact that the dogs *did* get some of the bread. " Truth, Lord ; they should not have any ; for they do get some : " would be regarded as a marvelous argument ; scarcely justifying unusual commendation. But our Lord, exhibiting the Jewish idea, having said " It is *not* proper, " etc. ; the woman contradicts, " Yes, Lord (it is proper) ; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs, morsels, bits, that fall from their master's (the children's father's) table. " The proper exposition, it would seem.

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