

# **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

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The parables of Jesus by Philip Coghlan

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# THE PARABLES OF JESUS

BY

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"THE PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS"

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## PREFACE

THE Parables convey the teaching of Jesus in an intuitive and practical form. They contain nothing that is merely theoretical or speculative, no subtle disquisitions on matters that have no bearing on life or conduct. In them the essential unchanging duties of man are so presented as to be within the comprehension of the simple and unlearned. They were originally spoken, not written; and they were addressed to people for the most part rough and uneducated. Jesus spoke not only to His contemporaries, but for all time, and so we may believe that He looked out beyond those who gathered about Him on the hillside, or who listened expectantly to Him on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret, or who formed a narrower circle of hearers like those who sat at table with Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee, to others dis-

tant in time and place whom He also wished His words to reach. Still, it is most natural to believe that the needs and capacity of His immediate hearers decided for Him at once the form and the matter of the Parables. It is well to be clear on this point, because on it depends to a large extent the question of their interpretation. When a teacher makes choice of the spoken word as his channel of instruction without any prospect of its being soon reduced to writing, and when in addition he uses a figurative narrative for the purpose of conveying a single lesson to an audience whose minds have not been trained—if, indeed, any training could achieve such an object—to penetrate what is figurative and perceive beneath it, not only in the gross, but also in particulars, the lesson which it is intended to convey—such a speaker must be more or less of an impressionist whose chief aim it is to produce an effect as a whole; while for his purpose details have no significance except in as far as they can contribute to this end, and so receive no such prominence

as would enable them to attract to themselves overmuch attention, to the prejudice of the general effect which he has in view.

The teaching of the Parables embraces the whole duty of man. The value of the individual human soul in itself, and its relations towards its Creator, are taught; but the great fact that man is a social being is equally emphasized. The neighbour is nowhere represented as an evil, even if a necessary evil, against whom the Christian who would be perfect must be on his guard, and with whom the less he has to do, the better. It is no wonder that love of the neighbour should occupy that important place in the Parables which we see it hold elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus. In Him as man the love of God for man received its supreme expression; and we may say with all reverence that this expression was conditioned by and dependent on the estimate which He had formed of man, an estimate equally removed from the exaggerations of those who on the one hand would deify human nature, and of those who