

**THE BYEWAYS OF THE BIBLE;  
OR, A SERIES OF BRIEF STUDIES  
ON CERTAIN SELDOM NOTICED  
PASSAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**

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The byeways of the Bible; or, A series of brief studies on certain seldom noticed passages of holy scripture by W. S. Lewis

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**W. S. LEWIS**

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THE  
BYEWAYS OF THE BIBLE;

OR,

A SERIES OF BRIEF STUDIES  
ON CERTAIN SELDOM NOTICED PASSAGES OF  
HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY THE

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Revelation," &c., &c.*



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## NOTICE.

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THIS little Volume, as its Title implies, endeavours to direct attention to such incidental and subordinate passages of Scripture, or to such branch lines of Scriptural inquiry, as are not usually discussed or met with in commentaries and sermons. It also seeks, in so doing, by studied brevity and conciseness, and by the general tone of its language, to meet the case of those persons who prefer devotional reading which shall lead and leave them to reflect and to judge for themselves. How far these objects will be thought worthy of attainment, and how far they will be regarded as attained, remain, of course, to be seen; but the writer hopes that this preliminary statement of them will at least assist the reader in passing a fair judgment on what he reads.

ST. GEORGE'S, WORTHING, JAN. 1870.



## THE BYEWAYS OF THE BIBLE.

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No. I.

### UNBELIEF TRIUMPHANT.

"They laughed him to scorn."—*Matt. ix. 24.*

You must often have noticed the effect of introducing a lamp into a darkened apartment. You see the lamp itself; you see a thousand other things by its light. It is much the same with the five words of our text. Spoken, as it were, by the way, they have not only all the vivid light of reality in themselves, but they also throw light on the whole history in which they occur. In particular they enlighten us, (1) On the Nature of our Saviour's Work, and (2) On the Right Interpretation of his Words.

First: As to HIS WORK. How wonderfully the words reveal to us the great depth of his humiliation. It was not only that the Lord was man, which is much; nor yet only that He was a very poor man, even one of the homeless poor (*Luke ix. 58*), which is more; but, what is most of all, that He was a man derided and despised. So psalmists and prophets had foretold, and



so evangelists here relate. Did it ever occur to you to consider how complete must have been the obscuration of His glory—how total the eclipse of that sun—to render this even possible? Had there been one scintillation or glimpse to the natural eye of the burning brightness of his Godhead, would any one have dared, would any one have been able, to “deride” Him? They “laughed him down,” so some render the expression; they drowned his words in contempt! To be worshipped by all the “gods” (Ps. xcvi. 7; Heb. i. 6); that was His right. To be the laughing-stock of men such as these, of the idle crowd that collect and gossip about a death, the hireling mourners who feel least and pretend most; that was His experience. The distance from that right to that experience is the measure of His humiliation.

Notice, also, from this, the completeness of His sorrow. He was “acquainted with grief,” with every side and shape and variety of it, even with that form which we should have expected to be the farthest of all from His lot. As one “born of woman,” we can partly understand His exposure to the sinless infirmities of our race, His hungering, thirsting, fainting, wearying, sleeping, bleeding, dying. In so wicked a world, again, as this is, His having to suffer from the opposition of enemies, and from the treachery and desertion of professed friends, is more disgraceful than surprising. But, coming into the world as He did, and being such as He was, speaking as man never spake, silencing the wisest, curing the most desperate, casting out the strongest,

changing the vilest, and speaking mercy to all—that He should, nevertheless, be derided and scorned; this is, indeed, strange. Any trial except this—so our expectation would have said. The inference is clear. If He was exposed to this, He was exempt from none. All the rest of the cup must have been exhausted before He partook of these dregs.

This consideration may teach us, yet further, the greatness of His love. All this depth of suffering was for our sake. It was because a half-exhausted cup would not have saved *us*, that He compelled Himself to drain all. Like one descending a coal shaft, who does not stop short of the very lowest depth because those he desires to rescue are known to be trembling and gasping there, so was it with the Lord. He endured even the scorn of contemptible man in order to save man. Strange, indeed, was that scorn; but stranger still His reply—not in judgment, not in anger, scarcely even in rebuke. Those who despised Him should not be witnesses of His power; that was all. Was there ever such a combination of majesty and mercy? Wherein is He the more to be admired—in His power, or in His forbearance—in raising the dead, or in sparing the living?

II. We learn much as to the right interpretation of our Lord's Words, and so, generally, of those Holy Scriptures which bear testimony to Him. The special saying which called forth this outburst of scorn was the following:—"The maid is not dead, but sleepeth;" and the

special ground of that scorn was the intimate conviction of the hearers that she had actually died—"knowing that she was dead." It is evident, therefore, that they took the Lord's words in their most ordinary and obvious sense, never stopping to search for another, and never considering whether such a teacher and miracle-worker as He was could have really meant anything so absurd. It was a case of confounding the obvious with the true—of mistaking the apparent for the real—and of considering "first thoughts" so much better than "second," that no second thoughts are required. The mistake is very common. "He that believeth on me shall never die;" "Ye must be born again;" "Destroy this temple;" "This is my body," all are cases in point. The mistake arises from not recollecting—(1) That the true signification of a passage is not that which the hearer imagines, but that which the speaker himself designed; and (2) That, in the sayings of the Bible, where God is practically the speaker, and man the hearer, these two meanings are so far from being necessarily identical, that they are often as wide asunder as the poles. The fact is, that the common clay of our earthly language must frequently be employed by the Almighty after a super-earthly and heavenly manner, and consequently must frequently mean other and more than if it had come from our lips. We must, never, therefore, run away with that notion, which seems to furnish so easy a way of closing all controversy, and which is so flattering and fascinating to dull and indolent minds, that what is called a plain man's view of a