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A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE TOWER-BUILDER AND THE KING.

A SUGGESTED EXPOSITION OF LUKE XIV. 25-35.

THIS passage has five divisions :

1st : The description of the situation ver. 25 : multitudes accompanying Jesus.

2nd : His statement to them of a necessary condition of discipleship vers. 26, 27.

3rd : The two illustrations of the Tower-builder and the King vers. 28—32.

4th : A repetition for emphasis of the condition of discipleship ver. 33.

5th : A conclusion, expressed in figurative language, from the preceding thoughts. This is the saying about the salt vers. 34, 35. It seems to mean : Disciples then are desirable (cf. "Ye are the salt of the earth"); but if even a disciple have lost the vital principle of discipleship, nothing can be done with him ; he is of no use in the world.

The passage closes with the familiar formula which our Lord often used after uttering especially searching words to unsusceptible hearers : "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear !"

The core and substance of our Lord's thought lies in the emphatic statement, thrice repeated, vers. 26, 27, 33, *οὐ δύναται εἶναι μου μαθητής*. (Note the emphatic position both of the verb and of the pronoun : "Cannot possibly be a disciple of mine.") His general meaning and intent are plain. He is announcing a necessary condition of discipleship with Himself. This is the stern renunciation of the claims of even the dearest earthly interests in comparison with His claim, and absolute self-dedication to His cause, even unto death. Without this one cannot possibly be a disciple of His. This must be understood, not simply as an initial

condition,—of becoming a disciple,—but also as a condition of continuing such, as the attitude constantly demanded in a disciple of His. (*v. βασιτάζει v. 27*, and cf. Luke ix. 23, “take up his cross *daily*.”) Neither is it an arbitrary requirement of His own which He might modify, if He would. The ground of the requirement lies in the very nature of the case. Discipleship with Him essentially involves self-renunciation and bearing the cross. His own mission involved Him in the same necessity. He Himself could not escape it.¹ It is not right, therefore, to regard this statement in the light of a hard and severe demand which Christ would lay upon men, like a heavy yoke. He is only saying that if men wish to identify themselves with Him, this is what it means to do so; they cannot possibly identify themselves with Him and *not* identify themselves with His cross. He does not present to men renunciation and the cross as an object of choice. He presents Himself. These possess no attractiveness, nor any virtue, in themselves, but only for His sake. Men might conceivably take these (men have done so) without Him. But He presents Himself *bearing the cross*. His disciples do not choose the cross and as a reward obtain His fellowship. They choose Him and as a consequence find the cross. And if any one wishes to be a disciple of His, he must understand and accept the necessary connexion.

But what thought are the two illustrations of the Tower-builder and the King designed to convey? And what is its relation to the statement of the condition of discipleship which precedes these illustrations in vers. 26, 27, and which again follows them in ver. 33? This paper is intended to bear on that one point alone. At this point I believe the usual interpretation goes astray, namely, it misses the meaning of the illustrations and, with that, the proper

¹ Cf. Matt. xxvi. 39: “My Father, if it be possible (*εἰ δυνατόν ἔστω*), let this cup pass away from me.”

connexion between vers. 26, 27, and vers. 28-32. I hope to show this and to suggest a better interpretation.

I.

According to the traditional interpretation, the illustrations convey an implied counsel to "count the cost" of discipleship. Christ is saying: "You can be My disciples only on such conditions as these. Now (He is supposed to imply) this presents a serious demand. Therefore, as a prudent man, before beginning any important enterprise, would consider carefully all that it involves, so do you consider carefully before undertaking so serious a step as this, lest having begun you fail in the end. For in that case you would be like savourless salt."

Now is this interpretation correct in finding in these illustrations an implied counsel to men contemplating discipleship, that they should count the cost; and in its consequent understanding of the connexion at ver. 28?

There are serious objections to this.

1. If we take the phrase "count the cost" in the only sense in which it can be legitimately taken here, then our Lord is represented as giving advice which it is inconceivable that He could give.

The words "count the cost" may mean, either "consider the sacrifice necessary," or "calculate the resources necessary."

Some distinguished commentators adopt the former sense. Of these Professor Bruce, in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, may be taken as an eminent example. He writes: "The connexion is: It is a serious thing to be a disciple. *Therefore* (italics mine) consider well before you begin—the renunciation required, the cross to be borne—as you would, if wise, consider before building a tower or engaging in battle." This can only mean that our Lord is

advising contemplating disciples to consider carefully whether they are prepared, in the sense of being willing to make the sacrifice necessary.

But this idea of considering the sacrifice involved is quite foreign to both illustrations. The figures of the Tower-builder and the King are not those of men considering the *sacrifice*, but of men estimating the *resources* necessary, and considering whether those resources are adequate. This cannot fairly be overlooked in the interpretation. The men are not asking themselves whether they are *willing* to pay the cost. But "desiring" (ver. 28. *θέλων*), to do a certain thing, they are considering whether they are *able*, with the resources at hand, to accomplish it. With reference to the King, this is manifest. There is no word about counting the cost. He will deliberate *εἰ δυνατός ἐστιν*. And in reference to the Tower-builder, the phrase on which alone this inference hangs does not support it. For *ψηφίζει τὴν δαπάνην, εἰ ἔχει εἰς ἀρπαρισμόν* is a case of the familiar idiom of prolapsis of the noun *ἀρπαρισμόν*, and is equivalent to the English: "Calculate whether he have enough for the cost of completion." Thus even the appearance of any such idea as counting the cost, in the sense of considering the sacrifice, vanishes utterly if we keep to what is really said, and are not misled by a preconceived notion.¹

Other commentators (Calvin, Alford) interpret the phrase accurately, in the sense of estimating the resources necessary. But upon this interpretation, our Lord would be represented as advising intending disciples, before embarking upon the enterprise of discipleship, to pause and make

¹ Note.—The only way in which the supposed counsel to count the *sacrifice* can be brought into these illustrations would be by taking the thought "whether he is able," to mean "whether he is able to *bring himself to the decision*" to make the requisite renunciation, that is, in a word, whether he is *able to will*. Good Calvinism indeed, but hardly good exegesis here!

a careful estimate of their own ability to carry it through; and if they are not quite satisfied that they are able, not to make the start.

No other deduction can be legitimately extracted from these illustrations, if they be interpreted as implying a counsel to intending disciples. Both figures imply that the only proper attitude for a man in their circumstances is that of prudent hesitancy and careful calculation: they both "sit down first," the Tower-builder to "calculate," the King to "deliberate" (*βουλευσεται*, Mid. Voice). The question to be determined by this delay is not at all whence they may obtain the necessary help, but, whether they have the ability to succeed: the Tower-builder calculates whether he has the cost of completion; the reason for his hypothetical failure and for the consequent ridicule is, that he was "not able to finish"; the King deliberates "whether he is able." In case of a negative judgment on this point, the course suggested is, that they should not attempt the enterprise. I repeat, that if these figures, as sketched by our Lord, *imply any counsel at all* to intending disciples, by way of imitation, it can only be this counsel,—that they, like these men, pause, deliberate, calculate, and, if they cannot satisfy themselves that they are able to carry to a successful issue the difficult enterprise of discipleship, that they do not enter upon it at all.

But is it possible that Christ could mean to suggest any such course as this in reference to the matter of discipleship with Him? An attitude, in one moved to be His disciple, of calculating indecision, supposed to issue, on the one hand, in a self-confident assurance that one is able to sustain the severe demands of discipleship, or, on the other hand, if one be filled with self-distrust, in a prudent abandonment of the thought of becoming a disciple,—these seem the very opposite of the attitude which Christ desires. Every-

where He summons men, not to deliberation, but to immediate decision ; not to "sit down and calculate " or "take counsel," but to rise and follow. Everywhere He demands a confidence for the future, not based on calculation, but on faith. He often warns His disciples against self-confidence and cautions humility, dependence on Himself and prayer. Discipleship is a great venture upon Him alone,—an heroic, unrecking surrender to Him,—not at all the issue of a calculated confidence in one's own sufficiency to bring to completion the Christian life. This is His invariable note. It is the note of the entire New Testament in calling men to Christ. It is the evangelistic note in all ages since. And this is quite the opposite of the attitude depicted and the counsel supposed to be implied in the figures of the Tower-builder and the King.

Christ does indeed warn men against ignorant, careless or half-hearted response to His call. But that is not to advise hesitancy and calculation. What He seeks to secure is action from the right motives and with an intelligent understanding and sincere acceptance, at least in principle, of what is involved in being a disciple of His. Men must not follow Him under the delusion of false hopes, nor from shallow impulses which do not lay hold upon the will. They must understand, that to be a disciple of His means to take up the cross for His sake. This He is here making emphatic. But He never warns men not to take this decision too hastily, as though haste might mean unwise precipitation in such a matter. How could He ? For however rash a prompt and uncalculating but genuine espousal of His cause might seem in the eyes of worldly prudence, it could never seem so in His eyes. Eternal issues turn upon men's attitude to Himself, and no possible consideration of worldly values could justify hesitation or delay, still less withdrawal, at that point. He did not fear that any man might give

allegiance to Himself too hastily, but only that men might become followers without really giving allegiance to Himself at all,—mere camp-followers. He is not solicitous for a carefully weighed response, but for a whole-hearted loyal one. Such a response might be impetuous or it might be deliberate, according to temperament; it might be self-confident, like Peter's, "I will die for thee," or more wisely conscious of the weakness of the flesh; it might have more, or it might have less, of intelligent appreciation of His aims and claims; it would certainly need, by later experience, to learn the meaning of obedience by the things it must suffer. But let there only be at its heart this personal loyalty which means to take up the cross and follow Him, if need be, to the death, and the prompter and less calculating it were, the better.

The familiar passage in Luke ix. 57-62 shows our Lord simultaneously in contact with the enthusiast and with the procrastinator. It well illustrates His way with each. We there see at once His insistence that one shall not follow Him under any delusion ("Foxes have holes, etc."), and also His insistence on an instantaneous and unreserved response to His call in the case of the two procrastinators. But we also see plainly, in the tone of His replies to each, that He is much more afraid of,—or rather, that He has much less tolerance for,—the spirit of hesitancy for any cause in a proposing disciple, than of a possibly mistaken enthusiasm.

Could Christ, then, have meant any such thing as the counsel here attributed to Him in the current interpretation? Especially, can we venture to attribute it to Him, when the ground for it is only an inference from two illustrations which readily admit a different interpretation?

Both Calvin and Alford, rightly interpreting the phrase "count the cost," feel the difficulty in which this lands them. Calvin writes: "I readily acknowledge that if

we calculate the expense, we are all destitute of power to lay a single stone or to wield a sword against the enemy." This is equivalent to saying that if we follow this supposed counsel, no serious person would ever venture to become a disciple of Christ's. And that is true. Alford tries to escape by saying that, in the case of an intending disciple, "the counting of the cost must always issue in a discovery of the utter inadequacy of his own resources, and the *going out of himself* for strength and means to build." Surely an interpretation reduced to such straits is in need of revision.

2. A second objection is, that upon this interpretation the main thought of the passage is left to inference. It is nowhere expressed.

At ver. 28, before the illustrations, this interpretation is obliged to interpolate: "Therefore, consider well before you undertake to be a disciple." But even then the thought does not run smoothly. After the illustrations, in ver. 33, following the words "So therefore," it must again interpolate: "Do ye the same in regard to discipleship, for, etc." Such large and important interpolations may only be resorted to if there is no other alternative. I shall show later that there is another.

But the seriousness of these interpolations does not consist merely in their mass, in proportion to the extent of the entire passage; but even more, in the way in which they are made to usurp the central place in the thought. The leading thought is not taken from our Lord's actual words,—His emphatic, categorical and thrice-repeated statement of the condition of discipleship; but this interpolated counsel to consider carefully before becoming disciples is given the central and governing place. The emphatic and repeated statement of the condition of discipleship is made subsidiary to this (supposed) counsel, and the illustrations in vers. 28-32 are then made to support

that counsel. Thus Professor Bruce says: "The counsel to deliberate is left out or latent in the requirement of renunciation, *which is the reason for deliberation.*" (Italics mine.) That is, our Lord is supposed to give the reason for His counsel, but never to utter the counsel itself. Surely it is doing violence to the thought to assign to a mere inference,—a confessed interpolation,—the central place, and to relate all the expressed utterances to that.

3. Therefore, as is inevitable, this interpretation does not fit snugly into the language actually used by our Lord.

It fails to note the *argumentum ad hominem* in the words *Τίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν* at ver. 28. It disregards the suggestions contained in the three main conjunctions, and supplants them by its own interpolations. Conjunctions express the relations of the elements of thought in a speaker's mind. But where the text reads *γὰρ* (ver. 28) this interpretation assumes that the real connexion in the speaker's mind is "therefore." (See Professor Bruce above.) On the other hand, where the text reads *οὕτως οὖν* (ver. 33) this must insert the idea of "for" or "because."¹ Thus instead of being drawn from the conjunctions, the common interpretation, at these two articulations, wellnigh transposes them.² It leaves the *οὖν* at ver. 34 meaningless. For a long time this word was dropped from the text, doubtless because of its apparent irrelevance. Now that it is restored by the compulsion of manuscript authority (Tischendorf, W. and

¹ Hoffman tries to correct this by putting a period after the word "you," reading "so therefore every one of you" (understanding, "do the same thing as this builder and king"). The next sentence would then begin: "Whosoever renounceth not all that he hath, etc." But even Prof. Bruce says: "This is very effective: . . . but it is hardly how Luke reports his words."

² On the current interpretation the connexion of thought at ver. 28 is: "Only on this condition can one be a disciple, *therefore*, etc." while the *word there used* is *γὰρ*: and the connexion of thought at ver. 33 would necessarily be: "Carefully count the cost of discipleship, *because*, etc.," while the *words there are* *οὕτως οὖν*.

H. and Nestle all insert *οὐν* here), we are forced to find for it a place in the thought. But this the current interpretation cannot do.¹ Likewise it gives no force to *καὶ* in ver. 34: "If even salt, etc." The force of these verbal criticisms can be better estimated in the light of the interpretation immediately to be suggested.

II.

I venture to think, that a simple turn will put us upon a better course. *Let the Tower-builder and the King be taken to stand for Christ Himself*, instead of for the intending disciple. And let the careful estimate of the possibility of success, which should be made by them before beginning, be taken as indicating the course which wisdom requires that Christ shall adopt with reference to those proposing to become His disciples, in view of the severe requirements necessarily involved in discipleship with Him. Instead of counselling men that *they* should consider carefully, before becoming His disciples, whether *they* will be able fully to meet the demands of discipleship, He declares, that *He* will consider carefully, in the case of every man, whether *He* will be able to complete the work, which, as Master, He has to do in and through His disciples,—for which alone He desires disciples. In order that He may hope to do this, He must find in the disciple the spirit of renunciation and self-surrender. Without that, He cannot carry through His enterprise with any man. Therefore, one who does not fulfil this condition cannot be a disciple of His. The moral requisites for the disciple-calling are wanting. And He, who knows men's hearts better than they themselves do, will judge each case for Himself. The illustrations,

¹ Plummer (*Inter. Crit. Com.* in loc.) makes the suggestion that it "perhaps refers to previous utterances," i.e. to utterances not found in this connexion!

then, depict the discrimination which the Master must exercise toward proposing disciples ; they do not counsel those contemplating discipleship to exercise prudence and calculation towards the Master's call.

The thought of the passage would then run thus : In view of the great crowd following Him, among whom He knew were many who would stand no sort of stress upon their loyalty, He turns and states plainly what is involved in discipleship with Him. One must cast off the restraint of the most precious earthly ties, if necessary even with the vehemence which hatred itself would inspire, and must bear his own cross (the symbol of a life devoted to death). He who does not do this "cannot possibly be" a disciple of *His*. Then, according to a common method in His reasoning with men, He appeals to their own accepted principles in justification of this condition : such a one cannot be a disciple of His, "for which of you" (*T'is γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν*) would not exercise prudence in any great enterprise, and carefully count whether he have wherewithal to finish ? Or what king (like Himself), going to war against another king, would not first carefully consider whether he is able, with a small force, to meet an army greatly its superior in numbers ? And if he find that he can only expect defeat, he will not advance. So Christ, unless He sees that He can accomplish His work with disciples who present themselves to Him, will not be guilty of the folly of undertaking it. "So therefore whoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath he cannot be a disciple of mine." He would not by this be understood as not desiring disciples : but not devitalised disciples. Disciples ("salt"), then, are good. But even if disciples ("if even salt") have lost the active essence of discipleship, as they will certainly do under any other condition, nothing can be done with them ("Where-

with will you season it ? ”). They are worse than useless¹ (“ fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill ”). The final result is that they must after all be rejected (“ men cast it out ”). The inference is plain : then why begin at all with such as will inevitably come to this end ? Most appropriately after such solemn sayings comes the warning : “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” These words and these alone express the only counsel in this passage.

I venture to think, further, that the two illustrations may, without straining, be taken as suggesting the two lines on which Christ must be able to carry forward His work in the case of every disciple. He has two things to do : a work to accomplish *in* the man himself, and a work to accomplish *through* the man in the world. As Tower-builder He is working *upon* the disciple, building up His Kingdom in the man’s heart and life. As King, He is working *through* the disciple, meeting with a small body of soldiers the apparently overwhelming odds which oppose the victory of His cause. Both enterprises are strenuous, and He must have men on whom He can depend to the uttermost, men detached from the restraint of all other interests and unreservedly surrendered to Him, men who have taken each his own cross for the death. Otherwise, at some point in its progress, His undertaking will break down. (Recall the seed sown upon rocky ground.) It is a severe experience for a human soul to be built up after the pattern which Christ has for it. Only those who are prepared to crucify the old man will endure the process. And if they fail, men will mock at Christ. It was apparently a warfare against enormous odds upon which Christ had entered,—from a worldly point of view, a forlorn hope. Only soldiers can be safely trusted in such a case who are ready to die rather than to turn back.

¹ Thomson says that such corrupted salt is not only worthless but destructive. *Land and Book*, Sec. xxvi.

Finally : in the imagery of the salt the main emphasis is not to be placed upon the destruction of the salt in itself, as is often done, but upon the consequences to the owner and to others of the salt becoming savourless. The passage chiefly suggests, not that so much salt perishes, but that it is rendered useless to the owner and injurious to others. And the thought that Christ would lift into prominence here seems to be, not the loss which the disciple suffers (although that is doubtless suggested), but the loss to Christ and to his Kingdom through the disciple's unfaithfulness and defection.

III.

In support of this interpretation the following considerations may be presented.

1. It is, at least, quite as natural in itself to suppose that in these illustrations our Lord is adducing a *reason for* the stringent requirement of discipleship as it is to suppose that He is deducing a *cautionary counsel from it*. It is far more natural that He should compare Himself to the builder of a great structure and to a king than that He should compare His disciples to such. Elsewhere He applies both figures to Himself (cf. Matt. xvi. 18, *οικοδομήσω*). He never applies them to His disciples. How inept indeed it would have been to compare these peasants and fishermen with tower-builders and kings ! Yet how aptly these figures apply to Him ! Furthermore, it is quite in harmony with His mind, as we know it in His other teachings, that He should represent Himself as judging men proposing to be His disciples, but quite unlike what we hear from Him elsewhere, that He should advise men to undertake a searching introspection and critical judgment upon themselves.

2. It avoids the objections to which the current interpretation is exposed.

It does not attribute to our Lord a counsel of delay and calculation in reference to discipleship, so incompatible with His consistent demand for immediate and unreserved response to His call.

It recognises the *argumentum ad hominem* at ver. 28, contained in the words *Τὸς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν*. The current interpretation invents a comparison here between something unexpressed and the building of a tower, instead of observing the comparison *between speaker and hearers*, actually expressed in these words. Yet this is a form of argument not uncommon with our Lord, and especially characteristic of His sayings reported in this section peculiar to Luke's gospel. And He uses it always to vindicate or explain His own ways or God's ways, by appealing to principles of conduct accepted among men. "Who of you would not do so and so under given circumstances? Even so will God do, or will I do." There is another example in this very chapter, verse five. Recall also the argument for confidence in Prayer, xi. 5 and 11, also the saying in xvii. 7, and especially the first two parables of the fifteenth chapter: "What man of you having an hundred sheep, etc.?" (xv. 4), and "What woman having ten pieces of silver, etc.?" (xv. 8). "Even so (οὕτως) I say unto you, etc." (xv. 7, 10). Now here is identically the same form of expression as in these other passages. In all these other cases the analogy is recognised by all expositors as drawn from *men* in given circumstances to *God* (or to Christ) in similar circumstances. In this passage only the current interpretation would have us draw the analogy from men in one situation (the tower-builder and the king) to *men* in a like situation (the disciples). But why construe the identical expression differently here from everywhere else, especially when it is made even stronger by contrast with the emphatic *μου* at the end of the preceding verse? But if we

admit its force here, then our interpretation of the passage as a whole necessarily follows.

It respects the thought relations expressed in the conjunctions which our Lord Himself uses, instead of inventing others. The main thought of the passage certainly is the thrice-repeated, doubly emphasised and categorical statement that whosoever does not fulfil certain conditions "cannot be a disciple of mine." This thought is made prominent by three-fold repetition and by the emphatic position both of its verbs and of its pronoun. It is hard to see what more could be done either to emphasise it or to give it the leading place. Then, the relation of the two illustrations to this main thought can, according to the grammatical structure, be none other than that of supporting reason to main thesis. They are *introduced* by the *causal* conjunction γάρ, which looks forward; and they are *followed* by the *inferential* conjunctions οὐτως οὖν, which look backward. The γάρ (ver. 28) compels us to see in the following illustrations dependent sentences supporting the main statement just made twice over: "Such an one cannot be a disciple of mine, for," i.e. for the reason that follows (in the illustrations). The οὐτως οὖν, on the other hand, in ver. 33, compels us to see in the main statement, therein repeated for the third time, a *deduction* from the illustrations just preceding: "So therefore, i.e. for the reason that precedes, whosoever he be of you (πᾶς ἐξ ὑμῶν δς), etc., cannot be a disciple of mine," i.e. because, like these men, I will carefully consider before beginning with him. Here, then, both before and after the illustrations, is double linguistic evidence, which we cannot ignore, of the direction in which the current of thought is flowing in our Lord's mind. *He must intend to embody in the illustrations His reason or justification for the stringent requirement of vers. 26, 27, 33. He cannot intend to make a deduction from*

that requirement, as the current interpretation assumes.

Our interpretation also gives to both *οὐν* and *καὶ* (ver. 34) their full significance.

3. In this connexion it may be noted, further, that our interpretation preserves the unity and consistency of the passage both in expression and in idea. The tone of the passage as a whole is not hortative, but strongly declarative. It consists of categorical statements only. All the principal verbs, bearing the weight of the thought, are in the indicative. There is not an optative or imperative in it, save in the closing formula "Let him hear." Moreover, all the verbs express the idea of *can*, not of *ought*,—of what is possible, not of what is desirable.¹ Our Lord, then, is teaching here, not exhorting. He is stating an objective principle of universal and independent validity, an inherent necessity of the case, which he Himself could ignore as little as could proposing disciples. On any other condition, whosoever might desire it, discipleship with Him is impossible. Thus viewed, the passage contains a single thought, emphatically declared (vers. 26, 27), justified (vers. 28–32), repeated for added emphasis (ver. 33), and guarded from misapplication (vers. 34, 35). On the other hand, the current interpretation finds here two important thoughts, one a categorical statement of the condition of discipleship, and the other a counsel (implied) to count the cost; and these two thoughts are supposed to alternate with one another back and forth: first the statement, then the implied counsel, then the statement repeated, then the evil result of disregarding the counsel. What justification is there for thus altering this tone of strong affirmation into one of mere counsel and for thus breaking up the unity of the thought?

4. Our interpretation gives at least a possible and

¹ Cf. *οὐ δύναται εἶναι* thrice, vers. 26, 27, 33; *εἰς ἀπαρτισμὸν*, ver. 28; *μὴ ἰσχύουσιν*, ver. 29; *οὐκ ἰσχύουσιν*, ver. 30; *εἰ δυνατός ἐστιν*, ver. 31.

reasonable significance to both the illustrations used by our Lord. It may be correct to say that the difference between them has no significance ; but nothing is gained by such exposition. Whereas it is a distinct gain if we can discover a reason for, and a phase of meaning in each turn of our Lord's words. We at least banish tautology.

5. Several incidents in the gospel narratives reveal our Lord as actually exercising toward proposing disciples the discrimination here indicated, and not admitting indiscriminately all who present themselves. One might refer in particular to a striking illustration in John's gospel. "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed on His name, beholding His signs which He did. *But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them,* for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning men : for He Himself knew what was in man " (John ii. 23-25). Is not this "did not trust Himself unto them for that He knew, etc." just the attitude toward disciples depicted, according to our interpretation, in the figures of the Tower-builder and the King ? The parabolic form of teaching in Matthew, chapter xiii., seems deliberately chosen, as B. Weiss shows, partly for the purpose of serving as a touchstone to distinguish between the unreceptive and the receptive among His hearers. (*Leben Jesu*, B. iv. 2). Again, the discourse on the Bread of Life, spoken to the crowds at Capernaum who sought Him after the feeding of the five thousand, seems to have had a similar object. It certainly had that effect. "Upon this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." One recalls also the case of the rich young ruler required to sell all that he had and going away sorrowful. But one hardly needs specific instances to prove this discrimination on our Lord's part. The entire ordering of His ministry, after the miracle of the feeding of the

five thousand, shows how he tried to shake off the crowd and to secure disciples who understood and accepted what was involved in identifying themselves with Him.

All this does not conflict with His assurance, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." For the very point in these cases seems to be, that these men were not seeking Him, but some ulterior end through Him. They would make Him the means of advancing or attaining some object of their own ; they did not propose to put themselves at His disposal for the attainment, at any cost to themselves, of His end. They did not "come" to *Him* in any real sense at all, but desired Him to go with them, and they had no intention of abandoning their own will for His where the two might diverge. And He, with his insight into men's hearts, saw this and refused to trust Himself to them.

I venture to think that the interpretation here proposed has more than merely academic interest. Thus understood, this passage, more than almost any other in the gospel, makes clear the important practical truth, that the realisation of discipleship depends ultimately on the act of the Master, whose alone is the sovereign right to admit into the relationship, and not simply upon the decision of the proposed disciple, who must receive the standing of discipleship, if at all, as a graciously bestowed privilege. "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you." The gospel is often emasculated in its presentation, and men are besought to "accept" Christ in a way which seems to imply that there is nothing more necessary for discipleship than consent on their part. Is it not needful that we be reminded, that, before anything is really effected for us, Christ on His part must accept, and that this, after all, is the decisive and vital thing ? And should it not be made clearer, as He so clearly states it, that the condition of such acceptance on His side

is taking up the cross ? His yoke is indeed easy. But still there is a yoke. His way is one of liberty, joy and peace. But the gate is narrow. And does not experience prove that it is not by presenting discipleship as a mere matter of human choice, nor by easing the sternness of Christ's great condition, that men will be won to Him ; but by presenting it as a " high calling," worthy of all the sacrifice it may involve, and by maintaining His full emphasis on this essential condition of acceptance in it ? Real and deep is the response of the best that is in the human heart to the call for an heroic devotion, ready to accept death under a worthy leader in some high emprise. And it is because in all ages men have heard this note in Christ's call that they have risen and followed Him, " rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name."

THOMAS VERNER MOORE.

NOTE.—If the apostleship of Judas be suggested as a difficulty in the way of this interpretation, it may be said (apart from all other reference to the problem of Judas), that this interpretation does not necessarily imply that every one who does begin by sincerely taking up the cross will certainly persevere, but that no one who does not so begin can be expected to endure to the end. The case of Judas is, moreover, no more difficult to reconcile with our interpretation of this passage than with the unquestionable meaning of the statement in John ii. 23-25.