**15.**] These words are generally used by  
our Lord when there is a further and  
deeper meaning in His words than is expressed : as here—‘if John the Baptist is  
Elias, and Elias is the forerunner of the  
coming of the Lord, then know surely  
that the Lord is come.’

**16. But**]  
Implying ‘the men of this generation have  
ears, and hear not; will not receive this  
saying: are arbitrary, childish, and prejudiced, not knowing their own mind.’

**whereunto shall I liken**] See similar  
questions in Mark iv. 30: Luke xiii. 18,  
20; and note on ch. vii. 24.

**like unto children**: as children in their games imitate the business and realities of life, so  
these in the great realities now before  
them shew all the waywardness of children.  
The similitude is to two bodies of children,  
the one inviting the other to play, first at  
the imitation of a wedding, secondly at  
that of a funeral;—to neither of which  
will the others respond. Stier remarks  
that the great condescension of the preaching of the Gospel is shewn forth in this  
parable, where the man sent from God,  
and the eternal Word Himself, are represented as children among children, speaking the language of their sports. Compare Heb. ii. 14. It must not be supposed that the two bodies of children are  
two divisions of the Jews, as some (e.g.  
Olsh.) have done: the children who *call*  
are the *Jews*,—those *called to*, the *two  
Preachers*; both belonging, according to  
the flesh, to **this generation**,—but neither  
of them corresponding to the kind of  
*mourning* (in John’s case) with which the  
Jews would have them mourn, or the kind  
of *joy* (in the Lord’s case) with which  
the Jews would have them rejoice. The  
converse application, which is commonly  
made, is against the **is like unto children**,  
by which the first *children* must be the  
*children of this generation*; and nothing  
can be more perplexed than to understand  
*is like unto* as meaning ‘*may be illustrated by,*’ and invert the persons in the  
parable. Besides which, this interpretation would lay the waywardness to the  
charge of the *Preachers*, not to that of  
the Jews.

**18. neither eating nor drinking**] Luke vii. 33 fills up this expression by inserting *bread* and *wine*. See  
ch. iii. 4 The neglect of John’s preaching, and rejection of his message, is implied in several places of the Gospels (see  
ch. xxi. 23–27: John v. 35); but hence  
only do we learn that they brought against  
him the same charge which they afterwards tried against our Lord. See John  
vii. 20; x. 20.

**19.**] Alluding to  
our Lord’s practice of frequenting entertainments and feasts, e.g. the marriage at Cana, the feast in Levi’s house,&c.  
See also ch. ix. 14.

**But**] literally, **and**; i.e. **and yet**; see John xvi. 32.

**wisdom**] **the divine wisdom** which  
hath ordered these things.

**was justified**—the same tense as “*came*” both times  
—refers to the *event*, q.d., ‘they were  
events in which wisdom was justified, &c.’  
The force of the past tense is not to be  
lost by giving a *present* meaning to either  
of the verbs. The meaning seems to be,  
that the waywardness above described was  
not universal, but that the *children of  
wisdom* (in allusion probably to the Book  
of Proverbs, which constantly uses similar  
expressions : see ch. ii. 1; iii. 1, 11, 21;  
iv. 1, &c.) were led to receive and justify  
(= clear of imputation) the Wisdom of  
God, who did these things. Cf. Luke vii.  
29, where in this same narrative it is said,  
*the publicans* **justified** *God*. The *children  
of wisdom* are opposed to the wayward  
*children* above, the child*like* to the child*ish*; and thus this verse serves as an introduction to the saying in ver. 25.

**of**, not exactly equivalent to ‘*by,*’ but