*Himself would not speak of him thus*, see  
ver. 49; but in the simplicity of the narrative we may read **his parents**, and such expressions, without any danger of forgetting the momentous history of the Conception and Nativity.

**34.] fall,** as a stone of stumbling and rock of offense  
(see references), at which they should  
fall through unbelief.

**rising again**,  
—or, **rising up**—in the sense of ch.i. 52—*by faith and holiness;* or, the **fall** and **rising up** may refer to *the same persons;* as it is said by our Lord, ‘He that  
humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ I prefer  
this last, interpretation, as cohering  
best with the next verse: see note on it.

**35.]** This prophecy I do not believe  
to have its chief reference to the *deep  
sorrows* of the mother of our Lord *on  
beholding His sufferings*, much less to her  
*future death by martyrdom;* least of all  
to the Crucifixion, which by shedding the  
blood of her Son, would also pierce her  
heart and drain it of its life-blood and  
make it childless. None of these interpretations satisfy us: for the words stand in  
a totally different connexion and one far  
worthier of the honor of that holy  
woman, and of the spiritual character of  
Symeon’s prophecy: that prophecy is, of  
the struggle of many in Israel through  
repentance to faith in this Saviour; among  
which number even *His mother herself  
was to be included.* The sharp pangs of  
sorrow for sin must pierce her heart *also*  
(cf. esp. Acts ii. 37); and the general end  
follows; *that reasonings out of many  
hearts may be revealed;* that they who  
receive the Lord Jesus may be manifest,  
and they who reject Him: see John ix. 39.  
We may find moreover, in the traces of her  
connexion with our Lord in the Evangelic  
history, the piercing and dividing of her  
soul, and in the last notice of her in Acts i.,  
the triumph of her faith after the Ascension.

**37. fastings and prayers]** Not  
merely in the ordinary hours of prayer, at  
nine, and three, or the ordinary fasts on  
Monday and Thursday, but in an ascetic-devotional method of life.

**night** is said to be put first, because fasts were  
reckoned from one evening to another. Is  
it not rather because the greater solemnity  
and emphasis rests on the religious exercise  
by night?

**38.]** It was possibly at  
the hour of prayer; as she spoke of Him  
to numbers, who would at such a time be  
flocking to the temple.

**39, 40.]** RETURN TO NAZARETH.

**39.]** Certainly the obvious inference from  
this verse is, that Joseph and Mary returned from Jerusalem to Nazareth direct.  
But it is only an *inference*, and not the  
assertion of the text. This part of the  
Gospel History is one where the Harmonists, by their arbitrary reconcilements of  
the two Evangelistic accounts, have given  
great advantage to the enemies the