is in vain for the sinner to encourage himself   
in sin from such a declaration as this:  
for the very knowledge of the declaration  
excludes him from the exemption. “Our  
ears have heard the voice divine; We  
cannot be as they.” (Christian Year.)  
  
**much is given .... shall be much  
required**] The second **much** is not the  
**much** that has been given, but a proportionable   
amount of result of diligence, a  
**much** which he is to render.   
  
**more**]  
perhaps, *more than from others*: but  
more likely *more than had been deposited  
with him*, viz. that, and the interest  
of it;—see Matt. xxv. 15 ff.  
  
  
**49—53**.] The connexion appears to be  
this :—the immense and awful difference  
between the faithful and unfaithful servants   
brings our Lord to the *ground* of  
that difference, and its necessary development  
in the progress of His kingdom on  
earth.   
  
**49. fire**] It is extraordinary  
that the official announcement of the Baptist   
(ch. iii. 16)—“ *He shall baptize you  
with the Holy Ghost and with fire*” —connected   
with the mention of a baptism here,  
—with the promise Acts i. 5, and the appearance   
Acts ii. 3, so strikingly expressed  
as “*cloven (divided*, the very same word  
in the original) *tongues as of fire*” —have  
not kept the Commentators in general  
(Bleek is an exception) from falling into  
the blunder of imagining here that the  
*fire* is synonymous with, and means no  
more than, the *discord* and *division* which  
follow. The fire is, *the gift of the Holy  
Spirit*,—the great crowning result of the  
sufferings and triumph of the Lord Jesus.  
To follow this out in all its references  
belongs to another place :—see notes on  
Mark ix. 49, and Acts ii. 3. This fire, in  
its purifying and separating effects on the  
mass of mankind, causes the **division**  
afterwards spoken of.   
  
The *construction* of the latter words in this verse has  
been ever a matter of dispute, while the  
*meaning* is on all hands nearly agreed. The  
three prevalent explanations of it are: (1)  
That adopted in margin, which is apparently   
Origen’s, **And what will I?**  
**would that it were already kindled!**  
This abrupt ejaculation might seem unlike  
the usual character of our Lord’s discourses :  
but we have a similar question in John xii.  
27, and under corresponding circumstances,  
of *His soul being troubled*. (2) **And how  
I wish that it were already kindled !** To  
this, which is adopted by Theophylact, and  
some distinguished moderns, chief objection   
is, that the words of the original  
will not bear it: see in my Greek Test.  
(3) That of Euthymius, Beza, and the  
A.V., **What will I, if it be already  
kindled?** i.e.“ *What more do I await in  
the world, seeing that it is already kindled?*”   
But this presents a great difficulty  
as regards the context; for, by ver. 50, it  
evidently was not kindled: and even if  
this were overcome, the expression, evidently   
a *deep one of personal anxiety*  
(and be it remembered who said it), would  
be vapid and unmeaning in the extreme.  
All things then being considered, I prefer  
the *first* explanation.   
  
**50.**] The symbolic   
nature of Baptism is here to be borne  
in mind. *Baptism* is equivalent to *Death*.  
The figure in the Sacrament is the *drowning*,  
—the *burial*, in the water, of the *old man*  
and the *resurrection* of the *new man*: see  
1 Pet. iii. 20—22, and notes. *The Lord's  
Baptism* was *His death*, in which the  
Body inherited from the first Adam was  
buried, and the new Body raised again:  
see Rom. vi. 1—11, but especially ver. 10.  
And He was **straitened** (the best possible  
rendering) till this was accomplished: —  
i.e. in anxiety and trouble of spirit.  
The **but** here implies **but first**, i.e. **before**  
that *fire* can be shed abroad. Here we  
have then, as Stier expresses it, a “ *beginning   
of the passion*” of our Lord; the  
first utterance of that deep anguish, which  
afterwards broke forth so plentifully,—  
but coupled at the same time with holy  
zeal for the great work to be accomplished  
  
**51–53.**] {51} The work of *this fire*, as as  
it burns onward in the world, will not  
be peace, but division; {52} see Mal. iii 2, 3,